THE CISTERCIAN ORDER
OF THE STRICT OBSERVANCE
IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

Volume One

From 1892 to the Close of the Second Vatican Council

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The Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance in the Twentieth Century

VOLUME ONE
From 1892 to the Close of the Second Vatican Council

VOLUME TWO
From the Second Vatican Council to the End of the Century

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FOREWORD

Group efforts, when they are well coordinated and have a clear objective, are usually quite productive. That has been the case with the "OCSO – Twentieth Century" program, which required six years of gestation and growth, and which you now hold in your hands.

Those who took part in the 2002 General Chapter in Rome (Via Aurelia) will recall that the General Secretary for Formation, Sr. Marie-Pascale, presented on that occasion the *Observatiae* program, drawn up by the France South and West Regional meeting, for the third centenary of the death of Abbot De Rancé.

During the discussion that followed her presentation, I dared to suggest that the work be continued up to our own day, so as to complete the triptych begun with the *Exordium* program at the time of the ninth centenary of the foundation of the Abbey of Cîteaux. I also offered a few points of orientation, which, to some extent, have proved useful: first, to take advantage of the presence of several witnesses of the life of the Order over the last forty years; and second, to consider using the term "Family" as a synthetic title, taking into account that this word, coming from the Holy Father, opens and closes the century under consideration (see the minutes of session 22, p. 112).

By speaking of "Family," I did not have in mind the possible collaboration of other Cistercian groups, much less an overall history of our Orders and Congregations. My proposal was more modest: to clarify our history and identity in a way that would allow us to live in differentiated and complimentary communion with all who have a share in the Cistercian charism and belong to this Family.

Once the project began to take shape, it was decided not to retain the term "Family" in the title. Nonetheless, the reality implied in this term remains the context in which the program is to be understood. In addition, it was with great surprise that I came across an obituary panegyric prepared in advance by a faithful and foresighted secretary. It all goes to show quite clearly the complete autonomy and responsibility of the authors.

There is no need to present the content of the program here; a look at the table of contents will suffice. Nonetheless, it seems opportune to draw attention to the three parts of the work. The first part is a documented historical view of our story from 1892 up to the Second Vatican Council. The second part, with the collaboration of "witnesses" of what is being narrated, covers the Order's evolution

following the Council. The third part has to do with various aspects of Cistercian *life* throughout the whole of the twentieth century.

As was the case in the previous programs, *Exordium* and *Observantiae*, the primary aim of this program is to serve both initial and ongoing formation in the Order. Indeed, those who do not know where they come from will have difficulty knowing where they are going. Or, as we know from experience, a tree without roots comes crashing down with the first strong wind. Our young members have the right and the desire to know the story, and our elders have the duty and the privilege of telling it.

So then, the work is done, and has been a major effort. We are therefore all the more grateful to those who generously offered to help with persevering dedication and motivating enthusiasm. May the Virgin Mary, Spouse of Saint Joseph and Mother of the Son of God, bring the work begun to completion with the gifts of the Spirit.

Bernardo Olivera
Abbot General
Rome, March 2008

PART ONE: FROM 1892 TO THE CLOSE OF THE SECOND VATICAN COUNCIL

SECTION ONE: CONSOLIDATING A SPECIFIC IDENTITY (1892–1922)

CHAPTER ONE

The Reunification of the Trappists in 1892: The Foundations of the Order of Reformed Cistercians (1892–1899)

1.1. THE FINAL STAGES

An event that could have led to real communion among Cistercians early on was the congress held at Dijon in June 1891 for the eighth centenary of the birth of Saint Bernard.[1] This celebration could have been a concrete chance to confirm the existence of unity among the various observances within the single Cistercian and Bernardine charism.

It happened, however, that on that same day the Cistercian abbots of the Common Observance held their own General Chapter to elect the Abbot General. It was therefore impossible for any of them to take part in the congress.[2] In spite of their absence, the Bernardine festivities were not only a spiritual and cultural event but also a historical moment, making it possible for members of the various Trappist Congregations to hold a fraternal gathering. Abbots and monks—eighty-two in all—from forty monasteries experienced a moment of communion that gave them a desire for greater union in sharing the same charism.

In the midst of their enthusiastic gathering, the abbots signed their final request to the Holy See to be allowed to constitute an autonomous Congregation with an Abbot General chosen from their own ranks.[3] Acknowledging that the

1 At the time, the date of Bernard's birth was believed to be 1091, which, according to the historian H. Bredero, is the correct date, even though, since the time of Chomton and Vacandard (1895), it has been dated to 1090.

2 Some have claimed that the date was chosen intentionally to avoid all contact between Trappists and other Cistercians, but there is no proof for this assertion.

3 Up until then they formed three autonomous Congregations: two of them (the Belgian and Old Reform Congregation) followed Rancé's seventeenth-century Regulations; the third Congregation (the New Reform), who considered Rancé's Regulations to be a mitigation of the Rule, rejected them and claimed to practice the Rule of Benedict and the Usages of Cîteaux in all their purity.

Holy See considered them as Cistercians on an equal footing with the Common Observance, they gave as grounds for their request the difference between their life and that of the Common Observance and the fact that they were not involved in the General Chapter that was to elect an Abbot General to succeed Dom Bartolini, even though they were more numerous and followed the usages and customs of Cîteaux.[4]

There was still an eventful journey ahead on the path to unity. In order not to alarm the abbots of the La Trappe Congregation (the New Reform), Dom Wyart, Abbot of Sept-Fons (Old Reform), who was pushing for union, especially because he knew it was the will of the Holy Father, no longer mentioned Rancé. Rather, he referred only to the Rule and the Usage of Cîteaux, figuring that later on in the new Constitutions there would be room for "those modifications required by the times and for the sake of health," the very things that Rancé had introduced. But the abbot of Westmalle, seeing that Rancé's Regulations were no longer mentioned, thought he would be asked to renounce them, which he found unacceptable. He therefore refused to take part in the unification project, preferring to remain (as a mere formality) under the authority of the "President General of the Cistercians."

Nonetheless, in the end, on July 20, 1892, the Holy See ordered the three Trappist Congregations and the Casamari Congregation to meet for a General Chapter in Rome on October 1, 1892. On the program would be the question of forming them into a single Congregation, under terms that still needed to be laid down.[5]

1.2. THE CHAPTER OF 1892

The General Chapter of the four Congregations was held from October 1, eve (in those days) of Our Lady of the Rosary, to October 13, under the presidency of Cardinal Mazzella. The two Congregations that observed Rancé's Regulations had twenty-one votes, seven of which were for the Belgian Congregation (the abbot of Chimay was ill, and the abbot of Westmalle was replaced by a delegate). The so-called Primitive Observance (The New Reform, including La Trappe, Melleray, etc.) had twenty-eight votes. Both Procurators were present and were allowed voting rights. Five superiors were absent because of distance (Australia and China) or

4 See the text of this request in *Analecta* (1992): 228–30.

5 On a visit to Tilburg, Dom Wyart asked for the community's spiritual cooperation in favor of the cause of unity in the Order. A young novice (F. Louis-Marie de Gonzague), who listened to him, was inspired to offer his life for this cause. Dom Wyart hesitated before accepting. Shortly after, the young brother died of tuberculosis at the age of 19 years and three months. He made profession *in articulo mortis* on September 20, 1892, one week before the opening of the General Chapter.

health reasons, and were not represented. But the abbot of Chimay was in Rome and was able to attend some sessions, which explains why some of the voting rounds had fifty-two voters.[6] From the start, the three representatives of the Casamari Congregation withdrew from the proceedings: they depended directly on the Holy See and did not want to place themselves under an Abbot General by joining a new Congregation.

In his opening speech, the Cardinal stated the reasons for the gathering: it was not for the correction of abuses but, rather, in order to go from good to better in the best interests of all, that is to say, for the sake of reform in the spirit of conversion, shaping the Order in the image of the Church, with a supreme head as is the Holy Father. It would be organized according to the Order's basic constitution, the Charter of Charity. To quote a few lines of the speech:

> The Holy Father does you a great honor and has shown special interest in you by calling this meeting, of which there are few examples in history. He has done so to the advantage and to the perfection of your Order. To attain this goal, the Church wants first of all to strengthen you, and she therefore strongly desires to see you more united, for strength comes from unity. […] You will meet with difficulties in this work of unification. […] Any change appears as a breach of the Rule, the Constitution, or the usages. […] The Church gives you an example of proper discretion; she does not fear revising certain decisions in order to adapt to the times and different circumstances; she has even decided to revise her Decrees. To follow the Church is to take the sure path. Another pitfall to be avoided is that of confusing everything, without distinguishing what is essential and fundamental from what is accidental and secondary. […] Would it be reasonable to be overly attached to a few details to the detriment of what is most important? Would it be prudent to hold the Order back from unity in order not to leave behind a few secondary practices?

It was then a matter of trying to bring about this change with fairness and discretion, seeking adaptations appropriate for the times, and maintaining the essential. Since all belonged to the universal Church, any unjustifiable nationalism was to be avoided. On what basis would they found this union as requested by the Holy See and desired by a large majority? The basic documents being the Rule,

6 From a geographical point of view, the break-down of these 51 capitulants was 24 French (including Algeria, but excluding Alsace), 4 Dutch, 4 Belgians, 4 North Americans, 2 Spaniards, 2 Italians, 2 Irish, and one representative each from Great Britain, Prussia, Bosnia, Westphalia, Alsace, Austria, South Africa, Palestine, and Syria. In fact, though, in several of the monasteries founded from France, the superiors were still French.

the Charter of Charity, and the Usages of Cîteaux,[7] some wanted to use only these references. But was it possible in practice to keep the Rule entirely and exactly? The most intense discussions had to do with the times of meals in winter and during Lent. There appeared to be a wide split between positions, but, on closer inspection, did they really differ that much? Some ate as early as noon in winter, and did not wait until None or Vespers, as the Rule of Benedict requires, but they did not have "mixt" (breakfast), whereas the others could have "mixt" at 10 or 11 in the morning. Did it not come down to the same thing to have mixt at 10 and a meal after None or Vespers, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, to have a meal at noon and a collation in the evening? Some were afraid of ending up with mixt, meal, and collation, and, well, principles are principles! The Cardinal feared that this question would ruin the still-fragile union, so he worked it out that the Chapter would have to ask the Holy See to settle the question. But the Holy See sent the matter back to the Order, and it was necessary to discuss it again at the 1893 Chapter. As for the use of oil and butter for seasoning, this practice was accepted in 1892 by a 37 to 15 majority.

Time provided for work also varied between the two Observances, one having twice as much as the other. This point, however, seemed less crucial to the capitulants. They opted for flexibility: work would last from three to six hours.

Fortunately, the vote approving the union was taken before these discussions. It was voted in by 47 votes in favor and 5 votes against (with three abstentions on the part of the Casamari Congregation). As for the independence of this newly formed Congregation vis-à-vis the President (or Abbot) General of the Common Observance, it was approved by a majority of 44 votes to 7. The Congregation was to be called an "Order," with an Abbot General who would confirm abbatial elections and reside in Rome. Regarding Regular Visitations, by a vote of 37 to 7, they opted for a distribution along the lines of filiation, based on the Charter of Charity, rather than on a national or provincial basis.

The capitulants wanted to be more explicitly linked to the Cistercian tradition. The Order would not be called "Trappist," but, rather, "Reformed Cistercian," with the addition of "Our Lady of La Trappe." The abbot of Port-du-Salut and others objected to this allusion to La Trappe, and the new Abbot General mentioned the problem in a letter to the Holy See in December 1892. Nevertheless, the Holy See retained this title up to the purchase of Cîteaux in 1898.[8] As Dom Wyart saw it, the

7 The General Chapter of the Rancé Observance spoke in these terms in 1891: "Second Question: How, or on what basis do you want this union? Response (unanimous): On the Holy Rule, the Usages of Cîteaux, and the Charter of Charity, *with modifications required by the times and for reasons of health*.

8 In a letter on December 21, 1892, Cardinal Verga insisted that mention of La Trappe remain part of the official title, because it reminded everyone of the required strictness in the face of the temptation to give in to moral laxity and license.

choice of Rome, rather than La Trappe, as the Abbot General's place of residence, further emphasized the distance taken from the Rancé tradition.[9]

At the ninth session Dom Sebastien Wyart, abbot of Sept-Fons and Vicar General of his Observance, was elected Abbot General in the first round with 28 votes. The abbot of Melleray, Vicar of the other Observance, received 19 votes. They went on to elect "definitors." Since they would have to prepare a draft of the new Constitutions, there would be six of them for this first mandate, and the choices were evenly divided between Observances: from the Rancé Observance, the abbot of Achel, Dom Malachie Verstraaten, the sub-prior of Chambarand, Fr. Augustin Dupic, the sub-prior of Mont-des-Olives, Fr. Hubert Juchem; from the La Trappe Observance, the abbot of Timadeuc, Dom Bernard Chevalier, the prior of Tre Fontane, Fr. Jean Grandjacquot, and a monk of Mount Saint Bernard, Fr. Augustin Collins. Fr. Collins, however, seems not to have accepted his election (he was not present at the Chapter), and during the following year was replaced by one of his younger confreres, Fr. Basil Sheil, who was appointed Procurator; unfortunately he died on May 11, 1893 at the age of 37.

On October 14, 1892, just after the Chapter, the capitulants had a private audience with Leo XIII. The Holy Father congratulated them for their harmonious unification: "This very important fusion will give new life to the Cistercian Order and will be for it a source of invaluable gain. . . ."

On December 8 was published the Decree confirming the new organization of the Trappists into a single Order called the Order of Reformed Cistercians of Our Lady of La Trappe. The previous decrees that organized the Congregations up until then (decrees of 1834, 1836, 1839, 1847, and 1884) were abrogated. A second Decree (*Pastoralis muneris*), dated March 17, 1893, confirmed the decisions of the General Chapter regarding observance: for the time being, each superior was free to choose one of the two proposed schedules.

1.3. THE DRAFTING OF THE CONSTITUTIONS AND USAGES: THE GENERAL CHAPTERS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

1.3.1. The First General Chapter

From September 12–21, 1893, the first General Chapter was held at Sept-Fons, presided over by the new Abbot General. This Chapter drew up the new Constitutions.[10] Among the subjects dealt with, some were rather prosaic, like the wearing

9 He had already said so clearly in a letter of January 15, 1892 to the abbot of Sénanque; see *Analecta* (1992): 245.

10 At this point the draft of the Constitutions contained only 48 articles, divided into the following chapters: 1) Sources, 2) The General Chapter, 3) The Abbot General, 4) The Definitors, 5) The Procurator General, 6) The

of beards by choir monks (21 yes and 22 no; in the end they decided that beards could be worn only in those places where the local clergy wore beards). But the main bone of contention between the Observances had to do with the hour of the main meal, which was difficult to settle by mutual agreement, as had been the case already in 1892. They first voted on the principle of having a common schedule for all the houses (39 yes against 5 no), which would be the schedule of the Rule (24 yes against 20 no), but with adjustments to be agreed on later. The concrete proposals that were then presented did not obtain the necessary majority. Finally, Dom Wyart spoke in favor of keeping the meal at noon in winter and during Lent, with collation in the evening and an optional *frustulum* (light breakfast) in the morning. For all practical purposes this was Rancé's schedule, and it was approved with 31 votes in favor and 13 against. But the *letter* of the Rule was still kept intact, because the newly approved schedule established that Vespers would be celebrated at 11 a.m. in Lent, and thus they would not be eating until after Vespers! Likewise, for a simple fast of the Order, None would be prayed at the end of the morning.[11]

The nuns of the Order who formerly belonged to one of the other Observances had different rules for the admission of novices. In the New Reform there was a one year novitiate followed by perpetual vows, whereas in the Old Reform perpetual vows were preceded by three years of simple vows. The Chapter asked the Holy See to reestablish uniformity along the lines of the Old Reform. The Cistercian nuns of La Fille-Dieu (Fribourg, Switzerland) requested admission to the Order.

The 56 monasteries were ranked according to seniority, and Dom Eugene Vachette, abbot of Melleray, was elected Vicar, but his role involved nothing more than replacing the Abbot General after his death until the election of his successor. He also presided at the General Chapter when the Abbot General was unable to attend. The Definitory was renewed: of the first group there remained only Fr. Augustin Dupic (for one year) and Dom Bernard Chevalier, whose resignation was refused (in the end it would be accepted after the Chapter by Dom Wyart, who then appointed a replaecement, Fr. Benoît Chambon of Aiguebelle, who would be reelected Procurator up until the 1908 General Chapter). The new definitors were Dom Candide Albalat, abbot of Désert, and two monks from Sept-Fons, Fr. Urbain Houvenaghel and Fr. Tiburce Benoist. It was their task to finish off the Constitutions and prepare the new Usages.

Abbot and the Prior, 7) Uniform Observance. The final article, 48, speaks in these terms: "The utmost must be done to maintain uniformity of observance as required by the very nature of our Order: 'so that there may be no discord in our conduct, but that we may live by one charity, one Rule, and like usages' [CC 3.2]."

11 It was not until the 1949 Chapter that they decided to restore Vespers to its proper place in the evening during Lent. But in the schedule approved by this Chapter, Terce and Sext remain at 7:30 a.m. in Lent, and None at 8:30 a.m.!… It was even a half-hour earlier for the nuns. The indult of December 7, 1955 allowed the celebration of Mass in Lent after Terce, thus making it possible to restore Sext and None to their proper times.

At the end of the Chapter, the abbots, who had signed a petition to the Holy Father in favor of the canonization of the Bl. Margaret Mary Alacoque, made a visit to Paray-le-Monial to consecrate the Order to the Sacred Heart.

1.3.2. The Second General Chapter

The second General Chapter was held September 12–20, 1894 at Tilburg (Koeningshoeven) and dealt with the Usages. It took six days to approve the draft prepared by the Definitors. The Constitutions had been approved and confirmed by the Holy See by a decree of August 25 of that same year. The clerical nature of the Order was shown in the fact that the only monks with voting rights, including for abbatial elections, were those in Holy Orders, even if only simply professed (except for the simply professed themselves when it was question of voting monks in for solemn profession, which, in any case, was only a consultative vote). Some would have liked to reconsider this question and give non-priest solemn professed their voting rights, but, in the end, the Chapter did not think it opportune.

The commission created at the preceding Chapter continued its work on the publication of chant books with ancient neums according to Cistercian tradition. It was also asked to compose new Offices, for example, the Office for the Blessed Sacrament. The appointment of the Definitory was done according to the new Constitutions: two for the French language and one each for German, English, and Dutch. In principle their mandate was five years, from one plenary Chapter to another. But, since the 1898 Chapter was to be a plenary Chapter, in order to celebrate the eighth centenary of Cîteaux, the Definitory of 1894 would not be renewed until then.

On September 17, the capitulants took part in the dedication of the church of Tilburg. They decided to hold the following Chapter on August 24, 1895 at La Grande Trappe, where it was also foreseen that the reconstructed church would be consecrated. For an unknown reason, Dom Wyart cancelled this plan. The Chapter would be held at the traditional time at the Abbot General's monastery, Sept-Fons.

1.3.3. The Third General Chapter

The third General Chapter was held at Sept-Fons, September 12–20, 1895. The work of this Chapter focused mainly on the Usages of the nuns. The project, however, was suspended, because it was feared that the Holy See would use the opportunity to take governance of the nuns away from the Order. It was thought best

not to present anything. They requested only that the 1883 Constitutions of the New Reform be applied to all the nuns.

On the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the attack on Rome, the Chapter sent a message of solidarity to the Holy See. They also dealt with the April 16, 1895 French tax law entitled "de l'Abonnement."[12] The cellarer of Aiguebelle, Fr. Jean-Baptiste Chautard, was invited to give an opinion on this law, the purpose of which was to destroy the religious Orders. It was decided to hold out and not submit immediately to the law.

A report was given by the commission entrusted with drawing up a curriculum for the formation of future priests. The Chapter was informed about the negotiations under way to buy back the monasteries of Cîteaux and Santa Croce in Gerusalemme in Rome (see below, § 1.4). The Usages of the lay brothers were also discussed. The monasteries were taxed to cover the expenses of the Generalate.

The Constitutions and Usages were printed in a single volume in 1895. The preface points out that "the Holy See's approval of the Constitutions of the Order of Reformed Cistercians of Our Lady of La Trappe was the crowning achievement of the work of unification requested by the Decree of July 20, 1892."

1.3.4. The Fourth General Chapter

The fourth General Chapter was held at Aiguebelle, September 12–17, 1896, still presided by Dom Wyart, with 43 participants. Dom Wyart spoke to the capitulants at length about the project of unifying the two Orders in view of the eighth centenary of the Order of Cîteaux. It was, however, impossible to envisage a union that would not respect the respective identity of each Order as expressed in their constitutions. A commission was appointed to study this wish for unification. They were willing to leave the name "Trappe" out of the official title and to form several autonomous Congregations with their own observances, but there would be a single General Chapter and a single Abbot General elected by all the abbots.

Dom Wyart had his heart set on this project, even to the point of tampering with some of the figures of the consultation that had been made in the monasteries, in order to obtain a more clearly positive response: he counted as being in favor those who expressed no opinion at all, and added "votes" from the nuns, who had, however, not been consulted! Nevertheless, the project failed because of the refusal of the Common Observance (which may have feared being dominated by the more numerous Trappists; see § 1.6). Dom Wyart did not always proceed with tact and respect for others, as could be seen in the attempt to purchase Santa

12 See below, chapter 2, § 2.2 for more details on the various threats that weighed on the French monasteries.

Croce in Gerusalemme in Rome, about which the Chapter was informed (see § 1.4).

The monks of Akbès in Syria had experienced difficult times because of turbulence in the Ottoman Empire. They were asked to seek asylum elsewhere but refused, for fear of putting at risk the surrounding civilian population, which was protected by the presence of the monks. Held siege for three days by bands of Kurds threatening massacre, they managed to obtain safety by contacting the military authorities, who sent reinforcement.

Requests for various foundations were presented, but were unable to receive favorable responses. In the course of the preceding year the Order had lost is Protector, Cardinal Monaco Lavalletta, for whom a solemn service was held. He was succeeded by Cardinal Mazzella, who had presided at the 1892 Chapter.

1.3.5. The Chapter on the Occasion of the Eighth Centenary of Cîteaux, at Tre Fontane, April 21–26, 1898.

There was no General Chapter in 1897. There should have been a plenary Chapter, i.e., superiors of distant houses would have needed to attend. But it was preferred to meet in the spring of 1898, in order to celebrate together the eighth centenary of Cîteaux. This plenary Chapter was held in Rome, at Tre Fontane, April 21–26.

A three-day retreat preached by the Redemporist Provincial, Fr. Desurmont, preceded the solemn celebration of this eighth centenary on April 29, feast of Saint Robert. Four Cardinals were present, including the new Protector of the Order, Cardinal Mazzella, and the general superiors resident in Rome also attended. Dom de Hemptine, Abbot Primate of the Benedictines, celebrated the solemn Mass.

This Chapter dealt with the question of Dom Candide's work with the monasteries of Cistercian nuns in Spain in view of their spiritual affiliation with the Order. Twenty-five monasteries were ready to take this step, and authorization was requested from the Holy See (see the chapter on Las Huelgas).

Drawing conclusions from the regular visitations he had made, the Abbot General stressed the Order's need to:

- strengthen the principle of authority among us,
- avoid weakening ourselves through foundations and multiple undertakings,
- be more careful regarding the admission and training of novices,
- and foster the interior life through perfect observance of the Rule of Benedict.

1.3.6. The First Chapter Held at Cîteaux, September 12–17, 1899.

The tradition of holding General Chapters at Cîteaux recommenced in 1899. The rescript of July 4 of that same year had recognized the abbey as the Mother House of the Order. The rescript had ruled that the Abbot General would be its titular abbot, and that the Order would leave out mention of La Trappe in its official title. Dom Wyart saw this document as marking a new stage in the life of the Order, i.e., the restoration of the early tradition before the Trappist interlude. But there was still a great distance between symbol and real experience in the communities. It would be the work of the decades ahead.

The capitulants split into four commissions, each one being assigned different questions to deal with separately: the expenses of the Order and the difficulties caused by the political situation; rubrics, ceremonies, usages, chant, etc.; reports from the regular visitations; and matters concerning the nuns. Each commission reported on its work, and when necessary, presented questions that required a decision of the Chapter. For the first time the visitation reports were studied by a single commission, which came to the conclusion that, with the exception of three or four cases, there was nothing that required intervention on the part of the Order.

1.4. APPENDIX 1: THE ABBOT GENERAL'S TITLE AND PLACE OF RESIDENCE

The General Chapter of 1982 decided that the Abbot General should resign from his own abbey and become by right abbot of Tre Fontane. Nonetheless, the ordinary affairs of the Tre Fontane community would be taken care of by the local prior, with the Abbot General intervening in the abbey's administration when he though it opportune. Before the election of October 11, 1892, the prior-superior of Tre Fontane, Dom Jean Grandjacquot, protested that the community would therefore be unable to elect its superior. The protest was taken note of, but was never dealt with.

However, when confirming the acts of the General Chapter on December 8, the Holy See stipulated that Dom Wyart would keep his title of Abbot of Sept-Fons until the following Chapter. Then, in the indult of January 14, 1893, it simply called him apostolic administrator of Tre Fontane, in the place of Dom Jean Grandjacquot, who returned to Acey. The draft of the Constitutions prepared by

the definitors for the 1893 Chapter went back to the 1892 proposition—that the Abbot General be the abbot of Tre Fontane—but it did not carry at the Chapter.

As Dom Wyart reveals in a letter of 1898,[13] the refusal of the title of abbot of Tre Fontane stemmed from the opposition of Cardina Oreglia, commendatory abbot of the abbey since 1877.[14] Rather attached to his title, his jurisdiction, and especially the ensuing income, he was annoyed when he got wind of the General Chapter's decision. It is said that he asked the Pope: "Just how many abbots of Tre Fontane are there?" The pope, to appease the Cardinal, seems to have suggested that Dom Wyart bear only the title of apostolic administrator. In fact, however, as early as 1880, the community had received power to elect a regular abbot. It was understood that this abbot would have the title "abbot of the monks" of Tre Fontane, whereas the commendatory abbot would keep the title "abbot of the abbey of Saints Vincent and Anastasius at the Acque Salvie." But was not this latter title the one the Abbot General would have received?

Dom Wyart retained administration of Tre Fontane until his death in 1904, even after he had traded in his title as Abbot of Sept-Fons for the title of Abbot of Cîteaux. This administration was a burden for him, because the material situation of the community was not particularly good. For a time he delegated this task to the abbot of Catacombs, but he later called on the help of competent monks, especially the young 27-year-old Alsatian, Br. Léon Ehrhard, who was not yet solemnly professed.[15] He made his solemn profession, was ordained priest on August 15, 1894, and, in 1900, was chosen as prior-superior of Tre Fontane, which he oversaw for 46 years (with the abbatial title after 1919!).

The Abbot General resided at the Procuracy, in the city of Rome, with the definitors. He could not continue being abbot of Sept-Fons, and, since the title of abbot of Tre Fontane had been confiscated by the commendatory Cardinal, he began looking for an abbey in Rome itself, which would then become the residence of the Generalate curia. As early as 1894 he set his sights on the abbey adjoining the basilica of Santa Croce in Gerusalemme. It was under the jurisdiction of the Cistercians of the Congregation of Saint Bernard in Italy. But the government had confiscated it in 1871, leaving only a small apartment for the few monks who served in the basilica. Since the place had become a barracks and military hospital, Dom Wyart figured he would be doing no harm to the Cistercians if he could get the abbey out of the hands of the Italian civil authorities and restore it to its religious

13 See *Analecta* (1984): 146–48.

14 He was the last Cardinal commendatory abbot of Tre Fontane. Upon the Cardinal's death on December 7, 1913, the Holy Father kept the abbey for himself.

15 The prior had objected that the doctor gave this brother less than a month to live, and that the Trappist regimen of little food and sleep was difficult for him. Dom Wyart waited a month, and then wrote to the prior: "I have not yet received the death notice of Br. Léon, so send him!"

purpose. But, obviously, the Cistercians saw the matter differently and objected. They found it unacceptable for the abbey to go to the other Order, especially since it had separated from theirs in 1892. Thinking that he was actually doing a good deed to the benefit of all,[16] Dom Wyart turned a deaf ear to these protests. He did not realize how humiliating it would be for the Italian Congregation to loose this place, one of the few it still had in Italy. According to the Congregation's President General, because of government policies, the Congregation was in such a weak state that it seemed impossible for it to get back on its feet.[17] Dom Wyart, with a promise of support from several Cardinals, including the Secretary of State, and even from the Pope, took the necessary steps with the government to buy back the monastery from the Italian state. In favor of his cause, he referred to the services that the Agricultural Society of Tre Fontane had rendered to the nation. It had been administered by the monks, in the Agro Romano, at the cost of many victims of malaria.

At first, he seemed to be succeeding in his attempts. On May 15, 1985, he triumphantly announced the matter to all the houses of the Order, and in September the General Chapter approved the purchase of the monastery. Dom Wyart wrote that it would be "a crowning achievement worthy of our Order; we will thus have in the Eternal City a community that will recruit excellent candidates from the many seminaries, which will help us obtain the esteem of all. . . ." This was not exactly the case. Cardinal Parocchi, Vicar of Rome, stated in 1898 that the Trappists were driving away the Cistercians from service in the basilica, and that the people of Rome and many prelates found them unbearable. The affair dragged on, the conflict between the two Orders intensified. The Procurator of the Italian Cistercians complained to the Pope about the Trappists on December 25, 1896. A copy of the letter was sent to the Trappists, and Dom Benoît Chambon, the Procurator, sent a refutation of it to the Congregation for Bishops and Regulars on January 25, 1897. He was successful to a degree, because the Pope let Dom Wyart know that he supported his undertaking.

But in the end, with an ill will that could no longer be masked, the minister of Fine Arts created difficulties that made the deal unfeasible. Dom Wyart, with the approval of the 1896 General Chapter, was willing to drop the matter. He was all the more willing to bow out, given that, since 1895, the prospects of being able to buy back Cîteaux looked good, even if all the difficulties had not yet been settled in 1896. With assurances from the Cardinal Protector that he would be able to

16 According to his letter of January 25, 1897 (which will be mentioned again later), the Trappist Procurator, Dom Benoît Chambon, states that Dom Wyart promised to allow the occupants to stay on. In fact, they needed more personnel to provide services in the basilica, and for several years already the Trappists had been helping out on Sundays and feast days. The buildings were in a pitiful state.

17 Letter of August 24, 1894; cited in *Union cistercienne*, November 1894, p. 88.

obtain the title of abbot of Cîteaux if the monastery were bought back, he finally gave up on the idea of acquiring Santa Croce in Gerusalemme.[18]

Cîteaux was in fact purchased in 1898, and a community was established there by October 2 of that year. Dom Wyart was elected abbot of Cîteaux on February 9, 1899, and the July 4 rescript confirming his election decrees that in the future Cîteaux will be the Mother House of the Reformed Cistercians, their Abbot General being, by that very fact, abbot of Cîteaux. As in the Middle Ages, the regular visitation of the Mother abbey would be provided by the four first Fathers, the Abbot General in turn being the Father Immediate of those four houses. (See § 1.5 below)

This situation lasted until 1963, and was not without disadvantages for the Cîteaux community. At the 1962 General Chapter it was decided that Cîteaux would have an abbot *de regimine*, elected by the community, as in other communities. The Abbot General would only be its Father Immediate. He was given the title Archabbot of Cîteaux. But in practice this term quickly fell out of use, because it placed the Abbot General in an awkward position vis-à-vis the Abbot General of the Common Observance, who also claimed the title abbot of Cîteaux. The outcome is that, in present-day practice, the Abbot General-elect resigns as abbot of his community (if he still was at the time of the election), but receives no other abbatial title apart from being Abbot General. His stability remains with the monastery of which he is no longer abbot.

With the reacquisition of Cîteaux, the abbey of La Trappe dropped to second in rank, and it no longer seemed necessary to mention it in the Order's title. This change of title was put into effect by the rescript of July 4, 1899.

1.5. APPENDIX 2: THE RE-OPENING OF CÎTEAUX, THE ABBEY OF THE ABBOT GENERAL (1898–1963)

(*by Fr. Placide Vernet, monk of Cîteaux*)

After various attempts at obtaining a Roman abbey, there emerged the possibility of buying back Cîteaux, beginning in 1895. In fact, Bishop Oury of Dijon, had been cherishing this dream since 1891, the year of the celebration of the eighth centenary of the birth of Saint Bernard. The site, which the monks had had to abandon in 1792, was then occupied by an agricultural camp established in 1846

18 On this whole affair, see the texts and study based on findings in the archives of the Generalate, *Analecta* 1984, pp. 107–49

and run by the Brothers of Saint Joseph.[19] But the organization collapsed after a series of scandals (real or supposed), which led to the Society of Saint Joseph's loss of public recognition as a useful institution in 1888. Shortly after the death of Fr. Donat—the second director, who had been the founder's right-hand man—the bishop wrote a letter to an abbot of the Order, and, with no delay, Fr. Jean-Baptiste Chautard visited Cîteaux along with another monk. Pope Leo XIII, in a letter to Msgr. Oury, applauded the undertaking; Cîteaux would be for the Trappists. The General Chapter, meeting at Tre Fontane in 1898, accepted (by a majority of 39 votes against 8) the idea of re-opening Cîteaux. This decision took place on April 25, a few days before the feast of Saint Robert, celebrated in those days on April 29. But the deal seems to have been difficult to close. In the end, the Cardinal of Lyon convinced the reticent Brothers to make the sale, and the Baroness de la Rochetaillée agreed to buy the property for 800,000 Francs and to rent it to the monks until they could reimburse the sum and become the owners. The houses of the Order would also be asked to contribute to this reimbursement.

The Re-Foundation

On October 1, 1898, the contract was signed at 4 P.M., and the first four founders left Sept-Fons. They arrived at Dijon at 1:30 A.M. and celebrated Mass at Fontaines, in the chateau where Saint Bernard was born. That evening they sang Compline in the church of the Brothers' camp at Cîteaux.

What was Cîteaux like at that time? The report of Dom Jean-Baptiste Chautard's first visit remains the best description:

> There is nothing left from the twelfth century, nothing. The soil is soil in name only. A veritable village occupies the place of our Fathers' Abbey. There are six edifying priests, twenty teachers or guardians, sixty religious Sisters, 250 children from nine to eighteen years of age, and a few domestics living in this village. There have been up to 950 children. That is to say, there is no lack of buildings, but most of them are laid out pell-mell or poorly built. The eighteenth-century abbey church (110 meters by 15 meters and three stories high), and a small building from the fifteenth century are the only constructions that stand out from the other eyesores in modern style. The recently built church—rather large but without character—and the house for the Sisters and young children are the only modern structures

19 This charitable organization was created for the disadvantaged youth of the day, and provided residents with a minimum of education, teaching them to read and write, instilling in them some notions of Christianity, and also training them in a trade that could be useful to society.

built with a little more care. There are 380 hectares (300 of arable land and 100 of irrigated prairies), 15 hectares of forest, 4 of vineyard, and 4 of garden. I set a price for myself, namely, 100,000 Francs.

Four men were appointed for the foundation: 44 year old Fr. Stanislas Bess, a 28 year old lay brother, Bernardin Fur, who ended up leaving two weeks later, a 22 year old simply professed monk, Bernard Rigaud, who died seven months later, and a 26 year old novice, Br. Fabien Dütter. Everyone was interested and amazed at the return of the monks. Little by little the house emptied of its former occupants. By December 31, the monks were in their future monastery. In the dormitory the choir monks had makeshift cells of second hand lumber, and the lay brothers slept side by side on old wooden floors. Monks arrived from various monasteries to form the community.

On January 11, 1899, Dom Sebastien Wyart obtained from the Sacred Congregation for Bishops and Regulars a rescript, signed by Cardinal Vanutelli, which allowed an abbot to be elected at Cîteaux even though none of the monks had yet made stability. The result of the election, held on February 9, left no doubt: the 10 electors (of whom only 5 would remain at Cîteaux) unanimously elected on the first round Dom Sebastien Wyart, the Abbot General. On July 4, a pontifical rescript confirmed his election and decreed that, in the future, Cîteaux would be the motherhouse of the Reformed Cistercians, their Abbot General being, by that very fact, abbot of Cîteaux.

The newborn community had three superiors: the Abbot General, who was its regular abbot, Dom Jean-Baptiste Chautard, who acted as temporal administrator, and the local prior, Fr. Stanislas. The latter, 45 years old, was a former Jesuit who had entered at Sept-Fons four years earlier after spending 15 years in China. But soon, not knowing where to start, he became overwhelmed and left the Order. Dom Symphorien Bernigaud, a monk of Sept-Fons and a Definitor, replaced him for a few weeks. The drama, which played itself out on two levels, that of the Order and that of Cîteaux, came to a resolution in September 1899. On the sixth, Dom Robert Lescand, a monk of Timadeuc, a Definitor, and master of students in Rome, arrived at Cîteaux to be the prior. On the twelfth, everything was ready for the General Chapter: 42 stalls and a screen were set up in the church.

This Chapter, the first held at Cîteaux since the unification of the three Trappist Congregations, was, at one and the same time, modest and important. For the participants it was a major spiritual event. The opening speech by the Abbot General and Abbot of Cîteaux, though brief, was noteworthy:

> We owe it to the Trappist Reform that we are who we are, that we have recovered and maintained the observances of the early Cistercians, and that we have made it through the final stages leading us to this stable dwelling place. Having reached our goal, we will no longer bear the name of wayfarers. [...] Moreover, the Holy See, in the same rescript by which it leaves us with the official name *Our Lady of La Trappe*, wants us henceforth to be called the *Order of Reformed Cistercians*.

The capitulants left and the founders remained, as the chronicler of Cîteaux wrote:

> with heavy debts, a poor start, numerous hired workmen at great cost (there were 35 of them), and fifteen former Brothers of Saint Joseph, who lived on the margins of the community and resented having been evicted. Then there was the community, a mixture of thirty members from fifteen different monasteries. Several were good elements and remained so. Many were lovers of change and novelties, restless and undesirable people whose superiors were glad to allow them to leave. All had different customs and a different spirit. To make one body, one community of that was difficult. From a material and spiritual point of view, then, it was a foundation made under poor conditions. Taking charge of it was a heavy responsibility, especially for someone with as sensitive a conscience as Fr. Robert Lescand.

To consolidate the authority of the prior, who, practically speaking, was the superior of the community, Dom Wyart obtained permission from the Holy See in 1901 to make him an auxiliary abbot.[20]

The same story can be told with numbers. In four years, from October 2, 1898, to July 5, 1903, nineteen monks remained at Cîteaux, thirty returned to their monasteries, ten left monastic life, and twenty postulants and novices entered, of whom six persevered. In other words, 85 persons passed through the community, 25 of whom persevered. The youngest was a novice from Scourmont, who ended up dying a jubilarian.

On July 30, 1902, was published the Apostolic Constitution *Non mediocri*, which recognized the Abbot of the new Cîteaux as possessing all the privileges of the Abbot of Cîteaux of former times (with the exception of ordaining deacons). This was the first time a papal document used the expression "Cistercian Family." But none of the monks of the new Cîteaux had stability there yet. The Visi-

20 Dom Robert received the title of Abbot of Saint-Aubin. His successors would end up with the titles of Baumgarten (Dom Fabien), La Bussière (Dom Godefroid), and Royaumont (Dom Jean).

tors—at Cîteaux these were the abbots of the four oldest houses, as in the Middle Ages—expressed their surprise. Later that year, on October 18, eight Brothers made their stability, and on December 31, Br. Fabien Dütter, the only remaining of the four founders, made his solemn profession. Thus was the community of Cîteaux formed; the average age was 44.

This was a hard-working and poor community. They gradually demolished the unneeded buildings of this "village," as Dom Jean-Baptiste Chautard described it (only one remains today). But too much is too much: on top of it all loomed the threat of plundering by the government. In 1911, and then again in 1913, Msgr. Augustin Marre, elected Abbot General, sold more than half the property and the farm buildings, which was also a way of reducing the debt. The community was relieved, but it meant setting up an agricultural economy in buildings not made for that purpose.

Then there was the Great War of 1914–1918. Some Brothers were mobilized, all inhabitable buildings were taken over by a military hospital, and the community moved into a building of workshops, where it would live in poverty for eight years. In winter, Dom Robert set up his office in the back of the cow barn in order to take advantage of the animal warmth. Some Brothers died. By 1920, there remained only 16 persons, of an average age of 56. However, after demobilization, excellent recruits arrived. In that same year, 1920, thanks to a generous gift, Cîteaux finished reimbursing the price of the purchase of the property. The monastery, which until then was sub-leased, now belonged to the community. The capitulants expressed their gladness:

> We wholeheartedly congratulate Rev. Fr. Dom Robert for the miracle he has worked with his fervent community. It is indeed no small thing to have been able, by dint of sacrifices and privations and without the help of a lucrative industry, to pay off in twenty years such a large debt incurred by the Order. [...] None of us, arriving at Cîteaux, would have hoped for such a magnificent outcome, especially after such a long and ruinous war. From now on, when we come to Cîteaux, we will better understand what a life of abnegation and poverty can accomplish in this regard, as we have here before our eyes. It is thus with our whole heart that we express our most sincere gratitude to Rev. Fr. Dom Robert and his devout community . . . for such wise administration and devotion to the Order.

The motherhouse thus had no financial worries as the visitors acknowledged in 1921.

The following year, the community of Cîteaux numbered 38 persons. Hous-

ing 38 in poor workshops set up provisionally as a monastery proved impossible. It became urgent to have the military hospital leave the premises and to wipe out whatever traces it left. Msgr. Marre took the matter in hand, and finally they began work on the eighteenth-century building, setting up offices and an infirmary upstairs, and putting in concrete floors on the ground level (the chapter and dormitories were already in place before the war). The old covered walkway between the church and the monastery, made of boards and beaten earth, was replaced with a brickwork structure. In 1922, the community was able to move into the eighteenth-century building designed by Lenoir. The new members were by then more numerous than the founders. One is tempted to sing with the Canticle: "Winter is over, and flowers appear in our land . . . ."

A Rather Cold Springtime: Dom Fabien Dütter (1923–1932)

The chronicler wrote for September 16, 1923:

> Our Right Reverend Father,[21] having gathered the conventual chapter, announced to us that Dom Robert had been elected Procurator General, and that it was up to him, as Abbot of Cîteaux, to give us a superior. He told us his choice, which was more or less final, and he added that he would be pleased if we would elect the person in question, or if we would at least let him know our preferences, noting, however, that it would require a large majority for another name to make him change his mind. He immediately distributed little pieces of paper for us to write a name on. A minute later we had each returned them to him by hand, and he watched the results as they came in. He then told us that the majority had approved his choice, and that he was giving us Dom Fabien as superior. Dom Robert, however, was to remain at the head of the community until his departure for Rome a few weeks later.

Dom Robert was 71 years old, and had, in fact, been superior for 24 years. On October 25, 1923, in chapter, the Abbot General installed Dom Fabien Dütter as "superior." He would be blessed as auxiliary abbot in September 1925. He had been a seminarian and a tutor before entering at Sept-Fons in 1896. He arrived at Cîteaux on October 2, 1898. He was the first professed monk of Cîteaux, cellarer, student in Rome, Doctor of Theology; he spent three years at Marianhill with his

21 The Abbot General at the time was Dom Ollitrault de Kéryvallan, elected in 1922.

relative, the abbot of Gethsemani (USA), Dom Edmond Obrecht, and, finally, was secretary to the Abbot General for 14 years—a rather impressive career path.

The economy was, after 25 years, still that of a French family farm operation. It is said that Dom Fabien planned to remedy the situation in the course of ten years, but he was only to have nine. He began, however, with the monastery, renovating the reading rooms off the long, 100-meter cloister. He also did a great deal for the church, the sacristy, the liturgy, and the guesthouse. He faithfully commented on the Rule daily. He wanted to be at all community exercises, including manual work. Moreover, he was much esteemed in the cultured circles of Dijon. The year after his installation, the capitulants were amazed at all he had accomplished. His greatest undertaking, however, was the farm economy, in order to give the community a means of production and a livelihood. To that end, the community had to work hard, sometimes too hard, as one visitation card mentions. In addition, Dom Fabien helped the community of nuns that had descended from Port-Royal—living in refuge at Besançon—at the time of its incorporation into the Order and its transfer to the abbey of La Grâce-Dieu. At Cîteaux, he received 24 postulants, 13 of whom persevered. If we add these to the ones Dom Robert received after the war, in 1932, there were 25 men in community, with an average age of 34. Nonetheless, at Cîteaux, in the most beautiful *lavatoria* of the Order (it is said), they washed their hands with powder from crushed bricks.

At the General Chapter in September 1932, Dom Fabien was elected Procurator General to replace Dom Robert Lescand. At Cîteaux at that time there was a monk endowed with many fine qualities, namely the prior, Fr. Nivard Lemaître. He was 51 years old, and had been, along with Fr. Edouard Cattoir, who came from Chambarand and Aiguebelle, the right-hand man of Dom Fabien. He could have been chosen to succeed him, but that is not what happened.

The Bright Summer: Dom Godefroid Bélorgey (1932-1952)

Dom Hermann-Joseph Smets, Abbot General since 1929, appointed Fr. Godefroid Bélorgey superior of Cîteaux. He was Burgundian, a veterinarian, a soldier, a convert at the age of 30, and a monk of Scourmont, where he had been master of the lay brothers, novice master, and prior. It is told that Dom Anselme Le Bail, his Abbot, once said of him, "It is not good for the moon to eclipse the sun." He owed much to his incomparable abbot, but he would have nothing to do with studies, and seemed aware of nothing but union with God in prayer. On November 1, the Abbot General introduced him to the community of Cîteaux.

A Burgundian, the new auxiliary abbot of Cîteaux, blessed on September 14, 1933, had a gift for words like Saint Bernard and Bossuet, appealing and persua-

sive. Novices flocked to him. During the first seven years he received 99 novices; over twenty years he received 147—in the course of 1936 alone he accepted 24. But out of an annual average of 14 entries before the World War, the perseverance rate was only 3 candidates per year. All these new people were young. Although there was an abundant work force, it was often unskilled. They needed to be fed, dressed, housed, and, above all, trained. Dom Godefroid reserved this latter task for himself. His twenty years of abbatial service were broken up by the war, which mobilized more than half the Brothers and held several of them prisoner. The guesthouse became, for a time, a military hospital. The community peaked twice at 88 persons, once before and once after these six years of war. The daily chapter, as a time for teaching and exhortation, lasted at least twenty minutes. On Sunday, the whole community was entitled to a minimum of forty minutes. What Dom Godefroid preached in community and in the novitiate became material for his books (written by one of his listeners, except for certain passages): *Sous le regard de Dieu*, *Humilité bénédictine*, *Pratique de l'oraison mental*, *Dieu nous aime*—books that would be translated even into Japanese. Thus, the boost he gave to the local community was passed on to other communities of our Order and beyond. People went to Cîteaux to see the community and its (auxiliary) abbot. He himself gave retreats in several communities and made some regular visitations by delegation of the Abbot General.

It can be said that, with Dom Bélorgey's term as superior, the period of re-foundation was over. Cîteaux had become a community like others. Its structure, however, remained unusual for some time, because its superior was not an abbot elected by the community, but, rather, the Abbot General, who did not live there and who delegated most of his powers to an "auxiliary."

The situation did not become normal until 1963. In response to the plea of Dom Jean Chanut, auxiliary abbot, the 1962 General Chapter decided that the Abbot General would no longer be abbot of Cîteaux, but only its Father Immediate, i.e., he would make the regular visitation.[22] The community would elect its own abbot *de regimine*, who in turn would be Father Immediate of the four oldest houses,[23] and would have precedence over the other abbots. On March 1963, Jean Chanut was elected regular abbot of Cîteaux.

22 To give the monks of Cîteaux as many available recourses as other communities, the four "first Fathers" were recognized as such at the 1993 General Chapter.

23 In 1965, Sept-Fons was brought into the filiation of Cîteaux out of consideration for the role Dom Chautard's community played at the time of the re-foundation of Cîteaux in 1898. Igny remained under the care of Cîteaux as its motherhouse. On the other hand, Westmalle later left the Cîteaux filiation for linguistic reasons.

Cistercium Mater Nostra

Paradoxically, by "falling into line," so to speak, the Cîteaux community acquired new prestige. Up until then, as the titular abbey of the Abbot General of Cistercians of the Strict Observance alone, it was unable to claim any particular role within the great Cistercian Family, for it would have been seen as a Trojan horse for one Order's seizure of control over the others. Devoid of any particular jurisdiction beyond paternity over its immediate daughter houses, it could look beyond the borders of the Order. This openness is especially easy for Cîteaux, because, situated in the heart of Burgundy, it is often visited by Germans; and many O.Cist. monasteries in Europe are German-speaking.

Dom Olivier, elected abbot of Cîteaux in 1993, was able to visit many of these monasteries, but the ninth centenary of the foundation of Cîteaux, in 1998, created a precious opportunity for fraternal encounters among all members of the Family. A "synaxis," which brought together members of the various Orders and Congregations that compose this Family, headed by the Abbots General, the Prioresses General of the Bernardines of Esquermes and Oudenard, and the President of the Congregation of Las Huelgas, prepared for that day. The Lay Cistercians were also represented. On March 21, 1998, Saint Robert—his relics well preserved—returned to Cîteaux, where he had arrived 900 years before. The community of Cîteaux had the joy of welcoming in its church nearly 800 brothers and sisters, all of its children, Orders, and Congregations marvelously intermixed. It would be impossible to express what the community of Cîteaux experienced that day, that whole year, and in the time since. The charity that is meant to unite all the children of Cîteaux since 1119 is not an empty word, but a reality, beyond the diversity of hoods, veils, and wimples.

After that encounter, the 1999 Chapters General of OCSO abbots and abbesses approved a "Declaration on Cistercian Communion" that invites local communities and regional conferences to form bonds of charity and collaboration with all the communities of the Cistercian Family, and willingly to take part in common celebrations, meetings, conferences, and courses. In this search for communion, the Declaration recognizes "the special place of the community of Cîteaux, mother of us all. As the historic symbol of unity in the Cistercian Family, we encourage it to pursue its fraternal and generous welcome towards all the members of the Cistercian Family who come to discover the place of our common origin."

1.6. APPENDIX 3: THE SITUATION OF THE TRAPPISTS VIS-À-VIS THE COMMON OBSERVANCE AFTER 1892

The year 1892 was the starting-point to life for Trappists in the twentieth century. It marked the joining together, or rather fusing, of the three Trappist congregations, which had been independent until then, and at the same time, according to "received" opinion, it marked their separation from the Cistercian Order as it had been reconstituted after the French Revolution. Several people maintain that the split had genuinely traumatic effects. Just what was the situation?

With the 1892 Act of Union, Did the Trappists Leave the Cistercian Order?

At its opening on June 17, 1891, at Vienna in Austria, the General Chapter brought together 11 abbots and 3 priors from the Austro-Hungarian Province, the abbot of Val-Dieu in Belgium, and the Procurator, Dom Herny Smeulders, who represented the Italian Congregation. It lasted only five hours, just the time needed to elect a new Abbot General—following the death of Dom Bartolini on July 26, 1890—and make a few decisions. Dom Leopold Wačkarz, Vicar General of the Austro-Hungarian Province, was elected at the age of 81. Before closing, "the General Chapter thought it opportune that in future the Cistercian Order of the Common Observance, apart from the Italian Congregation, be divided into three vicariates under the jurisdiction of the Abbot General, which vicariates would be called Belgian, Swiss-German, and Austro-Hungarian.[24]

By a decree of July 20, 1891, the Holy See confirmed the elections and the structure of the Order. The text says, however, that Dom Wačkarz is elected as "Abbot General of the whole Order," and that, "for the sake of better governance of the Order, the Chapter thought it opportune that the Cistercian Order, apart from the already established Italian Congregation, be divided into three vicariates under the jurisdiction of the Abbot General, namely, the Belgian, Swiss-German, and Austro-Hungarian vicariates."[25] Where the Chapter spoke of the *Cistercian Order of the Common Observance*, the pontifical decree speaks of the *Cistercian Order* period. But, judging by the way the decree is written, it meant the same Order.

Neither Casamari—which did not belong to the Italian Congregation, but was linked directly to the Holy See[26]—nor the Congregation of Sénanque,[27] nor any of

24 See the text in *Analecta* 1980: 76.

25 See the text in *Analecta* 1980: 83.

26 This is the reason that the congregation did not want to become subservient to the Strict Observance at the 1892 Chapter of Union.

27 It would only be fully integrated into that Order the following year, 1892.

the three Trappists Congregations in existence at the time were part of this Order, even if its Abbot General confirmed the abbatial elections in these latter Congregations. All, however, were Cistercian, just as were the nuns in Spain and others. No one at the time denied this fact. What made them Cistercian was the continuity they claimed with the monks and nuns of pre-French Revolution times.

When, in October 1892, the three Trappist Congregations united to form a single Order, the Order of the Strict Observance, they did not break with this continuity. It cannot be said that they left the Order of the Common Observance, whose constitution had just been approved in 1891, because they were not part of it. The new juridical structure they adopted did not change the nature of the monastic life. The capitulants in 1892 created nothing else but what they already were. They did not create a new religious family.

It is true that, as suggested and sanctioned by the Holy See, they decided that confirmation of abbatial elections would no longer be the prerogative of the Abbot General of the Common Observance. But was that prerogative what made them Cistercians?

As we will see later in this chapter, the confirmation of abbatial elections, inherited by Dom Wačkarz, was not universally exercised by the Superior General of the Order vis-à-vis the Trappists before 1834. Moreover, the fact that it was never exercised in the Congregations of the Iberian Peninsula, or in the Swiss Congregation set up in 1806, or in the Casamari Congregations, or still others, has never called their Cistercian identity into question. During the first centuries of the Order, the abbots of Cîteaux did not confirm elections, and in the 1783 draft of the Constitution, this right was not granted them. One of the consultants of the Holy See, Dom Augustinus Haudek, pointed out this fact in 1892; he wrote: "Nowhere do we read in the decrees of this Sacred Congregation an argument of this kind: the Trappists are under the authority of the Moderator General of the Cistercians, therefore they are Cistercian. . . ."[28]

So where did the opposite claim come from, as asserted by the second consultant to the Holy See, who was none other than Dom Smeulders, the Procurator of the Common Observance? His opinion was later taken up by Dom Wačkarz at the General Chapter of his Order in 1897, when he stated: "From their beginnings, the Trappists formed a single family with the Cistercians. . . . When they attempted to separate from the *common family* of the Cistercians, we raised a protest to the Holy See. They nevertheless completed this separation by electing a new Ab-

28 He cites the case of Casamari, which was completely independent. Haudek's report is published in full in *Analecta* 1992: 23–38. The quotation above is found on page 235.

bot General, confirmed by the Holy See, thus constituting a new religious family, completely distinct from the Cistercian Order."[29]

This affirmation, which would be repeated a hundred years later by one of his successors,[30] presupposes that the whole *Cistercian Family* is limited to the *canonical Order of the Common Observance*, which, as we will see, came to be with the Holy See's decree *Disciplinae regularis* of March 27, 1868. This assimilation, which took concrete shape in the 1930s with the abandonment of the qualifier "Common Observance," is not historically or canonically justifiable. There is no decree of the Holy See to back it. On the contrary, the decree of May 6, 1902, gives an affirmative answer to the question of whether the Reformed Cistercians, called Trappists, are part of the monastic Order of Cîteaux on the same basis as the Common Observance. Leo XIII confirmed this answer in his Apostolic Letter *Non mediocri* of July 30, 1902.

The Role of the President General Appointed in 1814

After Napoleon's abdication and the Congress of Vienna in 1814–1815, some Cistercian monks returned to Casamari (1814) and then to San Bernardo alle Terme (a.k.a. Saint Bernard's at the Baths) and Holy Cross in Rome (1817). The Procurator resumed his duties, and the Italian Congregation gradually built itself up again, receiving new constitutions, approved in 1831, that moved them closer to the mendicant Orders. This Congregation was to be overseen by a President General, elected for five years, who would reside at San Bernardo alle Terme.

The Pope, who had been imprisoned by Napoleon since 1809, returned to Rome after the emperor's abdication and set about rebuilding the religious Orders. On September 30, 1814, he appointed the President of the Italian Congregation as *ad interim* Superior General of the Cistercians, without specifying what this office would entail. It would not be put into concrete form until steps had to be taken that affected other Congregations.

In fact, up until 1846, besides his own Congregation, it was only with regard to the Trappists that this Superior General had a certain function. Concretely, it was limited to confirming abbatial elections. The constitutions of the future Trappist

29 "Trappistae inde a sua origine unam cum Cisterciensibus constituerunt *familiam*... Quum autem se a *communi* Cisterciensium *familia* separare niterentur, ex parte nostra Sedi Apostolicae protestatio porrecta est. Nihilominus ipsi hanc separationem perfecerunt, novum eligentes Abbatem Generalem a S. Sede confirmatum et sic novam *a Cisterciensi Ordine plane distinctam* constituere familiam religiosam." See *Analecta* 1989, pp. 388–89.

30 Dom Polikárp Zakar, *Analecta* 1997, p. 343: "Bisogna dire molto chiaramente che nel 1892, al momento della loro unione, le tre congregazioni dei Trappisti si separarono dall'Ordine Cistercense dando vita ad un altro ordine, poiché esisteva ed esiste un unico Ordine Cistercense" ["It must be stated very clearly that in 1892, at the time of their union, the three Trappist Congregations separated themselves from the Cistercian Order, giving birth to another Order, because there was and is only one Cistercian Order"].

Congregations were approved directly by the Holy See, and did not in any way provide for approval or confirmation of the acts of their General Chapters by a Superior General of the Order. After 1847, not even the appointment of Vicars General needed a particular intervention on the part of the Superior General, and each Vicar had all the necessary authority to direct his Congregation by presiding over his own General Chapter.

To get out from under the jurisdiction of Dom Augustin de Lestrange, the abbot of Port-du-Salut, Dom de Girmont, who followed the Regulations of Rancé, petitioned Rome in 1816 to raise his community to the rank of abbey and link it with the authority of the Superior General in Rome. Consulted by the Holy See, Dom Sisto Benigni, Procurator General of the Italian Congregation, approved this request, but also suggested that the Trappists recognize the authority of the Superiors that the pope had given to the Cistercians. And, in fact, the papal brief of December 10, 1816, which allowed the bishop of Le Mans to erect the monastery as an abbey, ordered that all of the superiors should manifest "their immediate and perpetual communion with the Superior General of the Order residing in Rome, in order to maintain complete unity and indivisibility."[31]

Later this measure would be concretized by the gesture of asking the Superior General to confirm abbatial elections. Beginning in 1818, he confirmed elections in abbeys of the Observance of Rancé: at Gard and Darfeld first, then at Mont-des-Cats in 1826, and at Port-du-Salut and Oelenberg in 1831. On the other hand, elections at Bellefontaine, of Lestrange allegiance, evaded his grasp. Confirmation of elections at Bellefontaine in 1827 and 1830 were requested from the Holy See, which delegated confirmation to the bishop of Angers.

From 1827 to 1834, the Trappists had their own provisional Superior General, appointed by the Holy See, Dom Antoine Le Saulnier, Abbot of Melleray. He affirmed that he had the same powers as the President General in Rome, and was surprised that Bellefontaine did not ask his consent before proceeding to an abbatial election.[32]

The rights of the Italian President did not become clearly defined until the 1834 decree establishing the Congregation of La Trappe. It is there stated that the General Moderator of the Cistercian Order presides (*praeerit*) over this Congregation and that he is to confirm abbatial elections. It was the only prerogative allowed him. And this prerogative would be "of a formal nature,"[33] i.e., only canonical

31 This sentence was submitted to Dom Germain for his approval on August 30, 1816, by Msgr. Mazio. It was also submitted to Dom Eugene de Laprade, who died before the letter arrived.

32 "The fathers of Bellefontaine cannot be unaware of the fact that the powers of the Vicar General of the Order of Cîteaux have ceased with regard to the La Trappe Reform from the moment those same powers were granted to me for those houses" (Letter to the Nuncio, March 16, 1830).

33 This is Dom Policárp Zakar's expression in *Analecta* 1997, p. 284. See also *Analecta* 1978, p. 395: "purely formal

impediments allow the General Moderator to withhold confirmation, and, in fact, confirmation was practically never denied.[34]

During a period of fifty years, outside of his own Congregation, this President General's only other prerogative was the confirmation of elections among the Trappists.

- The monasteries of monks on the Iberian peninsula, until their suppression in 1834–35, were autonomous and were in no way under the control of the new Superior General residing in Rome.
- The Swiss Congregation, formed in 1806 after the suppression of the monasteries of northern Germany, remained independent of the Superior General appointed in 1814. In 1825, the then president of the Italian Congregation, Dom Joseph Fontana, suggested setting up juridical links between the two Congregations, but the offer was rejected by the abbot of Wettingen, who responded that his own Congregation was sufficient, and that it did not even need the services of the Roman Procurator, because it could correspond with the Holy See through the nunciature.[35] This Congregation was suppressed in 1848, with only a few houses of nuns remaining. Monks from Wettingen revived Mehrerau in 1854, which in turn headed a new Congregation in 1891.
- As for the monasteries of Austria, Bohemia, Hungary and Austrian Poland, they remained cut off from the outside world for a few more decades to come, victims of Josephism. The Emperor wanted control over everything and to create a sort of national church. The monasteries lost their exemption and were placed under the authority of the bishops, and were not allowed to belong to a Superior General in a foreign country. The President General of the Order heard nothing from these monasteries until 1851.

The situation began to change after 1846. In that year, the two Belgian monasteries that managed to revive, Bornem and Val-Dieu, were recognized by Rome and placed together as a vicariate, the constitutions of which were approved more or less under the same condition as the Trappist Congregations, namely, that the President General of the Order also had the power to confirm the elections of abbots. He would also intervene in the choice of the Vicar.

In Austria-Hungary-Bohemia, the deadlock was broken with the Revolution of March 1848. Without leaving Josephism behind entirely, the young eigh-

confirmation." This expression was often used in the nineteenth century, along with the expressions *nominal* or *honorific* authority.

34 Thus the election of Dom Bernard Chevalier in 1888 was refused, because he was still only simply professed; but it was confirmed a year later when, after his solemn profession, he was again elected.

35 For this exchange of letters, see *Analecta* 1968, pp. 284–88.

teen-year-old emperor, Francis Joseph I—who reigned for 68 years from 1848 to 1916!—moved somewhat toward liberalism.

As soon as political changes made it possible, the abbot of Ossegg (Osek) contacted the President General, Dom Mossi, on May 6, 1851, sending him news about all that had happened since 1809, and asking for help. This letter was entrusted to the Nuncio, who passed it on to the Cardinal Secretary of State, who showed it to the Pope himself. In this letter one sees that it had been difficult to safeguard regular religious life.

The abbots that met in Baden-Baden on October 27, 1851, then again at Vienna May 10–18, 1852, wrote directly to the Pope on May 18, 1852: they wanted to reconnect with the central authority of the Order in Rome, and to form a Congregation. The loss of exemption, which cut the monasteries off from the Order, had indeed caused them to decline. They wanted to revive the practices of visitation and General Chapters. The Sovereign Pontiff answered by ordering an Apostolic Visitation that was carried out under the supervision of Cardinal Schwarzenberg, Archbishop of Prague, in 1854–1855.[36]

Following this visitation, the abbots met from March 30 to April 5, 1859, at the seminary of Prague, presided by the Cardinal Visitor. They decided to form an autonomous "Austro-Hungarian" Congregation, called by the traditional term "province." The constitutions, called the "Statutes of Prague," despite repeated requests by the interested parties, were never ratified by Rome, which lessened their effectiveness. Moreover, according to Cardinal Schwarzenberg, the persons elected at the end of the meeting were not those most able to move forward with the reform.[37]

The President General's Reply to the Rounder of Sénanque's Initiatives

These events incited the President General to take some initiatives to restore a certain unity to the Order. Before recalling them here, and in order to understand better the Trappists' stance with regard to these initiatives, it is necessary to point out another event of the mid-nineteenth century, i.e., the restoration of monastic life at Sénanque by Fr. Barnouin in 1857.

He wanted to have his foundation incorporated into the Cistercian Order. But when Dom Teobaldo Cesari, the President General, was asked by the Holy See for his opinion, he advised against it, declaring that the new family did not re-

36 On the events mentioned here, see, N. Konrad, *Die Entstehung der Österreichisch-Ungarischen Zisterzienserkongregation (1849-1869)*, Bibliotheca Cisterciencis, Band 5, Rome 1967 ; and et B. Schneider, *Neue Quellen zur Entstehung der Österreichisch-Ungarischen Zisterzienserkongregation (1849-1897),* in *Analecta* 1986, pp. 3–264.

37 He confided this judgment to the Holy See; see Konrad, p. 272.

flect the Cistercian spirit nor correspond to the Church's needs. He deplored the fact that, in the constitutions proposed by Fr. Barnouin, "sacred and ecclesiastical studies seem to be eliminated, in order to be replaced by manual work and agriculture." For him, the Church, as a victim of degradation in faith and morals, needed apostles. He went on to say: "I think it absurd that a monastic institution in the nineteenth century should be established so as to respond to the spirit, the way of life, and the needs, of the tenth and eleventh centuries... For this purpose it seems to me that it would be extremely useful if the monks of Sénanque applied themselves to sacred studies with enthusiasm, so that not all of them, but some of them, could unite apostolic ministry to contemplation, that is, preach the Word of God, teach children their catechism, hear confessions, and so on."[38]

This answer clearly indicated the state of mind prevailing among the Italian Cistercians, and helps explain the Trappists' reaction to the next initiative, which might have been a chance to regain a unified Cistercian Order.

Dom Teobaldo Cesari's Initiative, August 20, 1863

President General of the Italian Congregation since April 1856, Dom Cesari took the initiative of writing to all the Cistercian superiors, including Trappist abbots, on August 20, 1863.[39] He recalled the sad state of a Cistercian Order that had lost its strength for no longer being a compact body of closely united members or a strong army of united forces deployed for battle throughout the world: "Since Cîteaux is no more, the only monasteries that remain are separated from each other, without mutual bonds. They therefore lack the strength and effectiveness that can come only from the ordered cohesion of its members."

Canonically speaking, this was indeed the obvious conclusion. There was still no General Chapter to exercise authority over the entire body of Cistercians. As for the President's function, it could not be that of a vicar of a non-existent Chapter, nor that of a superior general of a centralized Congregation with true jurisdiction over each of its members, because, outside of his own Congregation, his power was reduced to being merely "formal." The Order at that time was made up of independent Congregations; its canonical unity no longer existed. In 1933, Dom Matthäus Quatember—who would later become Abbot General in 1950—

38 Report to the Holy See, September 4, 1857. Ten years later, Dom Cesari, when consulted once more, suggested inserting an article into the Constitutions—Rome did not take this up—stipulating that the Fathers had the right to send out labourers to preach the Good News where the Faith was unknown, since every cleric, even of the regular clergy, had the duty to spread the Faith, because he was a minister of Christ and a dispenser of the mysteries of God. See Nicolas-B. Aubertin, *L'approbation des Constitutions de la Congrégation Cistercienne de l'Immaculée Conception de Sénanque. La reconnaissance d'une "observance" (1854-1892)*, in *Analecta* 1988, pp. 225–307.

39 The letter, written in Latin, was published in *Analecta* 1988, pp. 210–13.

emphasized the fact that the suppression of Cîteaux in 1797 brought about a major change in the constitutional law of the old Order, which in turn changed the canonical situation of the communities and Congregations, forcing them to redefine themselves: "In strictly legal terms, the communities and Congregations were no longer obliged to recognize the President General as their ultimate superior. . . . The Cistercian Congregations that were established before the suppression of Cîteaux must each consent to this significant change in the constitutional law of the old Order."[40] This consent was given or would later be given with the approval of the various Congregations' constitutions, but it still did not lead to the reestablishment of the canonical unity of the Order as a whole.

Dom Cesari, who was aware of this fact, thought that the moment had come to consider holding a General Chapter that could deliberate on possible means to remedy the present sad state of division. He therefore asked the opinion of each abbot on this point.

This was an opportunity to be grasped. But the Trappists—and only their replies have been published[41]—turned it down. With the exception of the abbot of Oelenberg, they thought it impossible to hold a General Chapter when divergences in observance were so great. Dom Cesari's response to the founder of Sénanque clearly displayed the yawning gap between the Trappists and the other Congregations, Sénanque apart. There was incompatibility between those who followed contemplative life and those who had parishes and schools. Was there not the risk of a futile confrontation? The Trappists, who harbored painful memories of quarrels over observance among themselves, were probably sensitive to the possibility of discussions getting out of hand, as the abbots of Bellefontaine and Melleray in particular pointed out.

The Decree of March 27, 1868: The Birth of the Modern Order of Cîteaux (Common Observance)

It was plain enough that canonical union with the French Trappists was not feasible. But among the others who were reviving with greater or lesser success, was it necessary to abandon all hope of union? Pius IX sent Dom Cesari to visit the

40 In *Acta Curiae Generalis Ordinis Cisterciensis – Commentarium officiale*, Annus II (1933) Num 1–2, p.46, note 4.

41 In *Analecta* 1988, pp.213–24. We do not know how the Westmalle Congregation responded. According to Lekai (The Cistercians…, p.201), among the Austrians, in spite of the enthusiasm of the Nuncio who served as Dom Cesari's intermediary, there were scarcely any " takers." As early as February 22, 1856, Dom Angelo Geniani had invited—unsuccessfully—the abbots of Belgium and the Austrian Empire to take part in the Chapter of his Congregation, hoping to have their advice in view of restoring unity in the Order. The Austrians turned down the invitation under the pretext that their Apostolic Visitation was not yet closed.

houses of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the end of 1867.[42] Upon his return, on March 27, 1868, the pope signed the Decree *Disciplinae Regularis fovendae*, which gave the president General of the Italian Congregation real juridical authority over the Belgian and the Austro-Hungarian Congregations. The decree did not apply to the Sénanque Congregation, which was dealt with in the decrees of 1863 and 1868, and it did not take account of the Trappists. The Holy See doubtless wished to avoid putting them together with the other Congregations, for the reasons that had led them five years earlier to decline holding a General Chapter common to all Cistercians.

Consequently it was only the Belgian and Austro-Hungarian Congregations that were given Dom Teobaldo Cesari as Superior General, so that "all the monks, whatever their dignity, should show him submission and respect by the vow of obedience itself." Dom Teobaldo was instructed to convoke a General Chapter, in which the abbots, priors, and commissioners of those Congregations would take part with active and passive voice. In the meantime, the Vicars of those Congregations were made delegates of the Superior General. It was made clear that this first Chapter would deal with the business relating to the Belgians and Austro-Hungarians. But it was provided that further full Chapters could discuss the affairs of the whole Order, bringing together the three Congregations (Italian, Belgian, and Austro-Hugarian) with equal voice, both active and passive, for all the capitulants.

Dom Cesari convoked a General Chapter in Rome, April 6–16, 1869.[43] Among the wishes expressed was that the Order should have an Abbot General elected for life, who would not automatically be the President of the Italian Congregation. But a certain ambiguity crept into the discussion: was it a matter of electing an Abbot General for the whole Order—in which case the Trappists ought to take part in the election—or of electing an Abbot General for the Common Observance? The majority of the capitulants seemed to have favored this second

42 He returned from this trip delighted with the apostolic and charitable work carried out by the Austrian monks . . . (he was accompanied by his secretary, Fr. Smeulders). The report to the Holy See on his visit was published by Konrad, 279–82 (Doc. 38).

43 It would be better to call it an inter-Congregational meeting of abbots. Dom Cesari requested of the Holy See at the beginning of April that that the superiors of his Italian Congregation and those of Sénanque be able to participate, along with the Procurator General of the Order (i.e. the one from his own Congregation). This was a wise precaution, because the presence of two abbots and the secretary of the Italian Congregation and their Procurator Bottino raised questions in the minds of the Austrians, who, moreover, objected to applying the title General Chapter of the whole Cistercian Order to what, as they saw it, was a local Chapter. Dom Cesari answered that these latter members formed his council, and he pointed out that the Holy See had approved. But the next day, April 7, the three Italians were no longer present. The Austrians, 21 in all (with 13 or 14 votes), over against 2 Belgians, monopolized the discussion. The secretary of the Chapter was Fr. Henri Smeulders, future Procurator of the Order. The "protocol" (minutes of the exchanges) of the Chapter, as well as a synthesis of the decisions were published by Konrad, pp. 287–313 (Docs. 42 and 43).

solution, pointing out that by "Cistercian Order" they meant the Common Observance, and that only capitulants of the Common Observance would have active and passive voice.[44] A little later, the Chapter expressed its wish that the Holy See confirm Dom Cesari—about whom no one had any complaints—as Abbot General for life.

The decisions of that meeting did not receive the Holy See's approval, no doubt because Dom Cesari informed it of his refusal to be elected for life, supported in this decision by Dom Jerome Bottino, Procurator General. Dom Jerome also wrote the Holy See, expressing that, in his judgment, the election was not for an Abbot General of the whole Order, because only two Congregations had voted him in.[45] So matters continued as before: the two offices of president of the Italian Congregation and Superior General of the Cistercians were still linked together, but the latter office took on a certain canonical weight regarding the Belgian Vicariat and the Astro-Hungarian Province following the decree *Disciplinae regularis*.

Dom Cesari's mandate as president of the Italian Congregation was to expire in May 1870, while the Vatican Council was in full session. Pius IX extended his mandate, but, in 1871, the political situation in Italy precluded holding any more General Chapters.[46] The prospect of calling a General Chapter for an election was put off year after year and finally abandoned. Dom Cesari was kept in office indefinitely, which worried the Austrians.

After the election of Leo XIII, the Holy See, in early 1879, decided there would be an election of a new President of the Italian Congregation—the newly elected being Dom Gregorio Bartolini—but that Dom Cesari, who was 74 years old, would remain Abbot General of the Order. Dom Cesari died less than two months later, on April 29, 1879. According to the Holy See's decision, the Procurator, who at the time was Dom Smeulders, was to call and preside over a Chapter for the election.

This Chapter—held in Vienna in a hospice owned by Heiligenkreuz—brought together 15 persons, but the absentees had sent in their votes. The Chapter met in two sessions on April 29 and 30, 1880, and Dom Bartolini was elected Abbot General. The Holy See confirmed him for six years only. The five votes sent in by the Lérins Congregation were not taken into account, because this Congregation was affiliated only with the Italian Congregation, and because the monks did not take solemn vows. This time, then, the two offices of Abbot General and President

44 See the Acts of the Chapter of 1869, Konrad, p. 294, § 26. Following Fr. Smeulders' recommendation, the capitulants stated that, in speaking of their Order, they meant "Cistercian Order of the Common Observance." This is stated again in § 32.

45 See these two letters to the Holy See of September 20 and 21 in Konrad, pp. 322–23 (Docs. 47 and 48). His objection about the 1869 Chapter is found on page 295, § 36.

46 Holy-Cross-in-Jerusalem and San Bernardo alle Terme were expropriated. The monks were allowed only to occupy a few rooms, in order to continue their pastoral service.

of the Italian Congregation were still linked, but this did not determine the future, as the Holy See itself had said. The Trappist abbots of the New Reform, meeting at Aiguebelle in July 1881, sent congratulations to Dom Bartolini.[47] His mandate was renewed by the Holy See in 1886, but he died on July 26, 1890.

A General Chapter was therefore convoked on June 17, 1891, at Vienna. This Chapter elected Dom Leopold Wačkarz and defined the makeup of the Cistercian Order of the Common Observance, as was mentioned earlier in this chapter.

Conclusions

For the first time since 1787, the decree *Disciplinae Regularis* of March 1868, allowed holding an inter-Congregational General Chapter, with a superior having authority over them, an authority that involved the vow of obedience. We may consider this decree as the foundation of a modern Order Of Cîteaux, which will become more clearly defined in this first Constitution of 1891, and especially in 1900. It was clear that this Order, which described itself by the title of "Common Observance," never included the Cistercians of the "Strict Observance," called Trappists. The decree of 1868 does not mention them, and, in fact, the Trappists were not invited to any Chapter, not that this particularly surprised them, nor that anyone had to feel guilty about it afterwards; it simply did not concern them. In any case, if they were to participate, they would be invited guests, and they would be denied any active and passive voice in the election (if any) of an Abbot General, according to what was decided in 1869, which goes to show that the Abbot General was not theirs. Moreover, the capitulants were aware that they did not form the General Chapter of the entire Order, and that their decisions concerned only themselves.[48]

The fact that the President General of this Order continued to confirm Trappist abbots does not mean that they were incorporated into this Order or that they participated in its structures. This Superior General did not exert any real jurisdiction over them, as we have seen. Dom Cesari, in a letter to the abbot of Westmalle on June 27, 1869, admitted that "the Trappists were not subject to his government and jurisdiction and were not joined to the Cistercians of the Common Observance."[49] It could not be more clearly expressed. Later on, Dom Smeulders spoke in similar

47 For the text of the letter, see *Analecta*, 1978, p. 419.

48 See note 43. At several points they mention that they do not constitute the whole Order and that they do not want to do anything detrimental to the other Congregations (See the Acts published by Konrad §§ 6, 20, 21–22, 26, 32, 57, etc.).

49 This was the argument put forward by the Trappist Procurator to obtain leave for two Vicars General to take part in the Vatican Council in 1869, whereas that privilege was reserved for Superiors General; the President General was not that of the Trappists and could not represent them. See Collectanea 1970, pp. 344 and 352.

terms, saying that "Moderator General" was only an "honorific title" in relation to the Trappists. For this reason, he argued, he cannot be blamed for the ills of the Trappists, which lead them to ask for an Abbot General of their Observance. They already have what they are asking for in the person of their Vicars General; they should place the blame on themselves and not on the President General.[50]

If the Trappists were never part of this modern Order of the Common Observance, it cannot be said that they separated from it in 1892, when the President General (who in the meantime became "Abbot General") lost the power given him in 1834 to confirm their abbots. At most, it can be said that a form of communion in the Cistercian Family ceased to exist.

Before the French Revolution, the Common and Strict Observances coexisted more or less peacefully within a single Order governed by a single General Chapter presided by the abbot of Cîteaux. From the time of the suppression of Cîteaux in 1797, the *canonical* unity of the Cistercian Order has *never* been reestablished. The papal decree of 1868 had to do with only a part of the Cistercians. Monasteries or Congregations that existed before 1868 or that were founded afterwards took on other canonical forms, and did not cease being heirs of early Cîteaux. It is unwarranted to claim that after 1868 the primitive Order of Cîteaux subsists only in the new Order and that all those not belonging to it ceased to be Cistercian.

Perhaps this Order created in 1868 had a vocation to gather together all other Cistercians, men or women, within its bosom. It is legitimate to regret that this did not come about. And, in actual fact, the Order itself was sometimes opposed to requested forms of association. For example, the simple fact that the Chapter of 1869 limited active and passive voice to members of the Common Observance did not leave much of an "open door" for the Trappists to join the Order. Moreover, we know that when, in 1896, the Trappists offered to reduce their Order to the rank of autonomous Congregation, so as to form a single Order with the other Congregations, the 1897 General Chapter of the Common Observance turned down the proposal.

In our day, the ancient Order of Cîteaux can be called a single Order only if it is identified, not with one or the other of the Common or Strict Observance, but with the entire "Cistercian Family." This Family, although it is not a *canonical* notion, actually does exist, and includes within itself several canonically autonomous entities. The Abbot General of the Common Observance is head of the Order *in* the Cistercian Family; he is not the only head *of* the Cistercian Family any more than is the Abbot General of the Strict Observance or the Prioress General of Esquermes or the President of the Las Huelgas Congregation. The Cistercian

50 See *Analecta* 1992, p. 222 and 224.

Family amounts to more than the members of just one of these canonical entities. This remains true even if the President of one of them was once declared by the Pope as Superior General of the Order, and could conceivably continue to be, even in our day, the "Praeses" or honorific President of the entire Family, with the sole function of showing its spiritual unity. Why should the Cistercian Family's "pluriformity" entail building "a solid and lasting wall"[51] between its members? Why should pluriformity mean excluding one or the other component?

51 As the Trappists allegedly built in 1892, according to Dom Leopold Wačkarz in his March 12, 1898, answer to Cardinal Vannutelli; see *Analecta* 1989, p. 418. For his part, Dom Wyard states that after his election the Sacred Congregation forbade him to correspond with the Common Observance (letter of March 19, 1894, to Fr. Gregor Müller; see *Analecta* 1992, p. 310). Fortunately, dialogue has been reestablished in our times.

CHAPTER TWO

The Consolidation of Our Identity (1900–1922)

2.1. THE INTERVENTIONS OF LEO XIII AND PIUS X IN FAVOR OF THE ORDER

The 1901 General Chapter expressed its wish to obtain from the Holy See "a papal bull or decree that would recognize us as truly part of the Order of Cîteaux and confirm that we enjoy all the Cistercian rights and privileges." The Chapter left it up to the Abbot General to decide when and by what means it would be best to make this request, in order for it to be accepted. It was a delicate situation, not so much with regard to the Holy See as with regard to the Common Observance, whose opinion it was that we had left the Order of Cîteaux by having our own Abbot General and by becoming completely autonomous. According to the opinion of Dom Wačkarz, stated at the General Chapter of his Order in 1897, the Trappists had separated from the common family of Cistercians, and had established a new religious family, totally distinct from the Cistercian Order. According to him, we had cut ourselves off from the Cistercian "vine" (this statement was discussed earlier in § 1.6).[1] It seemed to Dom Wyart and the members of the 1901 Chapter that only a solemn word from the Holy Father could reestablish the truth.

Dom Wyart began by asking an experienced canonist, Msgr. Filippo Giustini, auditor of the Rota, to provide an argumentation that would make it possible to settle the question. The result was an 89-page volume, which drew the conclusion that the act of 1892 in no way lessened the Trappists' connection to the Cistercian trunk. With this document in hand, the Abbot General turned to the Holy See, asking it to confirm these conclusions. A special Congregation of Cardinals appointed by Leo XIII responded favorably and suggested asking the Sovereign Pontiff to confirm all the privileges granted to the Order of Cîteaux (rescript of May 6, 1902). The letter *Non mediocri* of July 30, 1902 provided this confirmation. The

1 The "vine" image comes from the letter of Dom Mauro Tinti, Procurator of the Cistercians, to Leo XIII on December 25, 1896. See *Analecta* 1984, p. 136.

letter states explicitly that, despite the Order's autonomy, its members are "true children of the same Cistercian Family, just as much as the Abbot General, the abbots, and the religious of the Common Observance." It goes on to say that they enjoy the same privileges, graces, indulgences, faculties, prerogatives, and indults as the Abbot General, the abbots, and the religious of the Common Observance use, enjoy, and profit from, "absolutely, without difference, and with the same authority and value."[2]

The year 1903 was the twenty-fifth anniversary of the pontificate of Leo XIII, and impressive celebrations were held. But four months later the Pope received the last rites because of a sudden onset of pneumonia. He struggled against death for two weeks and breathed his last on July 20, 1903.

> The conclave, which met immediately, chose, on August 4, the Patriarch of Venice, Cardinal Sarto. Away from Rome and confined to the infirmary of Laval, following a cataract operation, Dom Wyart was unable to take part in these events. He left Laval on September 8, 1903, to preside at what was his last General Chapter at Cîteaux, September 12–18, and then returned to Rome on October 2, never again to leave the Eternal City. The first thing he did was to obtain from the new Pope the apostolic blessing on his Order. He wrote to his friend Henry Derély: "I never saw Leo XIII again. This great pope is now in paradise with Pius IX. His successor delights everyone who has the good fortune to be near him. As for me, when he received me for a private audience, I was struck by his questions and observations about France and our Order. As he was speaking, I said to myself: do we ever have a Pope![3]

Dom Wyarts days were numbered. In July of 1904 he had the great joy of having a private talk with Pius X for an hour and twenty minutes. At the end, the pope said to him:

> I knew you before receiving you. You were a loyal and devoted son to Pius IX and Leo XIII, and you will be my devoted son also. You will get better; you won't die of your illnesses. You will still do much good.[4]

This great joy was to be his last. Shortly afterwards his sickness got worse, and

2 The text adds "and, if need be, we grant them to them." This is the formula used in cases of this kind to answer any objections ahead of time. It does not mean that the privileges of the Cistercians did not already belong to the Trappists, as some wanted to think.

3 Quoted by Fichaux, *Dom Sébastien Wyart*, Paris-Lille, 1910, p. 672.

4 Fichaux, p. 674.

on the evening of August 17 Cardinal Macchi conveyed the Pope's blessing to him. He breathed his last the following day at 3 in the afternoon (see, below, § 2.3.1.).

Shortly after being elected Abbot General, Dom Marre obtained an audience with Pius X, who confirmed him in his office as abbot of Igny. A few months later, May 31, 1905, the Pope sent him a letter confirming all that Leo XIII had done for the Reformed Cistercians, especially in his letter *Non mediocri*, and offering some encouragement and advice. The Pope exhorted the monks always to apply themselves to the Rule, prayer, and penance. He asked the superiors to pay special attention to the following:

- to vocational discernment: to accept only those persons able to bring "usefulness and honor to the Order," as the Constitutions expressed it;
- to serious formation for those who will go on to receive Holy Orders;
- to following the regulations with regard to managing property;
- to carrying out regular visitations in a conscientious manner;
- to following the procedure that requires all dealings with the Roman Curia to be carried out by a single Procurator, appointed by the Abbot General.

One might wonder what brought on this letter and these recommendations. When one sees how closely the requests of the Holy Father correspond with what will be Dom Marre's main concerns, the question comes to mind whether he was the one who asked for this papal intervention.

2.2. THE ORDER UNDER THREAT: RELIGIOUS PERSECUTION IN FRANCE (1880–1914)

Since most of the communities at this time were in France or depended on French communities, it can be said that the entire Order was under threat of the anti-clerical French government, beginning in 1878 and especially following the law on Congregations of July 1, 1901. Moreover this situation gave rise to the Order's expansion outside of France, many communities preparing places of refuge in foreign countries, some of which became autonomous houses. It was like the early days of the Church when persecution in Jerusalem dispersed believers, turning them into missionaries (Acts 8:4; see also 11:19).

On March 29, 1880, the French government issued two decrees: non-authorized Congregations—the Trappists were in this category—had to evacuate their establishments and dissolve within three months. For their part, the conservative

political parties were in a rage, and serious clashes were in the making. There was organized resistance, thanks to help from some politician friends of the monks and the local population; it would require police intervention to force the communities to disperse. This happened at La Trappe, Bellefontaine, Timadeuc, Dombes, Acey, Sept-Fons, Tamié, Grâce-Dieu, and Divielle. The large Spanish contingent of the Divielle community took advantage of this situation to make a new settlement in Spain.[5] Some communities were spared when local authorities yielded to resistance from the surrounding population, as for example at Mont-des-Cats. At Neiges it was . . . a heavy snowfall during the night that kept the troops from moving in.

Fortunately, the government was mostly interested in schools and had not expropriated the monks, who were able to return within a few weeks, except at Sept-Fons, where they remained dispersed for several years. Faced with the possibility of having to flee, Grâce-Dieu opened a refuge in Austria (Landspreiss). Sept-Fons opened two refuges, one near Madrid (Valverde) and the other in Croatia (La Coulpe at Réciça), which were closed in 1882 and 1894. Tilburg and San Isidro owe their beginnings to the same need, and the same applies to Our Lady of Deliverance in Slovenia. A few monks of La Trappe went to Tre Fontane. Neiges undertook a foundation in Syria, and it was the abbot, Dom Polycarpe, who led the founders and laid the foundations of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, near Akbès, where the Bl. Charles de Foucauld, then Br. Alberic, spent seven years in Trappist life.

In 1889, a law was passed that required three years of military service, which applied to young religious. But the law allowed that those who, after their twentieth birthday, spent ten years in a foreign land would be exempt. Many religious Congregations therefore sought to open formation houses outside of France to make it possible for their young members to avoid military service. This was the reason Sept-Fons founded Latroun in Palestine in 1890. At the 1899 Chapter, there was even talk of opening a house of studies in Beirut, but the project was never carried through.

The "loi d'abonnement" Inheritance Tax

Religious Congregations were also hounded by taxes as a way of strangling them. Already in 1880 and 1884, an excessively heavy tax (called *taxe d'accroissement*) was to be paid upon the death of any community member, in proportion to what he supposedly owned of the common heritage and which his survivors "inherited." In addition, these supposed possessions were subject to a 5% property tax.

5 After moving several times, the community settled at La Oliva in 1927.

But an 1895 finance law turned these taxes into an annual tax on the total of all goods and property (even things placed at the disposition of Congregations without being owned by them). According to some calculations, communities had to pay six or eight times as much as the most profitable businesses. What made this measure even more intolerable was that this so-called subscription tax (*impôt d'abonnement*) was payable for previous years, since 1884.[6] The stance of most religious Congregations in Catholic France, following the lead of the Cardinals of Paris and Reims, was to resist and not submit to these unjust laws. Dom Wyart intended to take this same route. Not everyone, however, was of the same opinion, and it was known that certain personages in the Vatican, including the Secretary of State, Rampolla, were bewildered by the idea of resisting when it could entail a hardening of the government' stance and a worsening of the situation. Informed of this opinion, Dom Wyart left for Rome on August 26, 1895, where he requested and obtained a private audience with Leo XIII. For over an hour he gave a detailed report of the situation in France, where the majority, with the exception of five Congregations of men, followed the Cardinals of Paris and Reims. The pope encouraged resistance and commissioned Wyart to convey his support to Cardinal Langénieux, Archbishop of Reims, which he did on September 2, before returning to Sept-Fons. A few days after returning to Sept-Fons he obtained the unanimous vote of the General Chapter in favor of resisting the law. The Chapter addressed a letter of support to the two Cardinals of Paris and Reims, a letter that created quite a stir in France.[7]

Nevertheless, in Rome, the trend in favor of submitting to the law took the upper hand and won the adherence of the Pope. This position was in line with Leo XIII's request that French Catholics, who were mostly monarchists and conservatives, support Republican institutions. Dom Wyart had to inform the 1900 General Chapter of the Holy Father's wish that, because of the difficult political situation in France, all possible occasions of conflict be avoided. "The Pope even wants us to comply with paying the subscription tax if the courts charge us to." The fact is, most Congregations were tempering their resistance, and the government was disposed to drop fines and other tax supplements for those who ceased resisting. Compromises could be made in cases where the legal owner of property was not the religious community itself.[8]

6 Many communities, in fact, had not paid the previous tax, by taking out lawsuits with the revenue service or by not declaring deaths. The revenue department therefore wanted to make up for lost time.

7 The text of the letter is found in Fichaux, *Dom Sébastien Wyart*, Lille-Paris, 1910, pp. 587–89. There is a collection of some fifty cases of national and local press coverage. The Cardinal of Reims, however, did not want this dangerous publicity.

8 These discriminatory taxes were not officially abolished until 1942.

A TEMPORARY LULL

But the worst was yet to come. Did they really expect it? One thing for sure is surprising: at the very end of the nineteenth century they had everything to fear from the political situation after the evictions of 1880, the discriminatory tax laws, and the first radical government of 1895, which forbade bishops from meeting. Nonetheless, several monasteries embarked on major building campaigns. La Grande Trappe was rebuilt on a grandiose scale between 1890 and 1895. Mont-des-Cats laid the cornerstone of a new monastery in 1891, and the church was consecrated 1898 (and was later a victim of the war in 1918). In 1893, Bricquebec obtained permission to rebuild in grand style.[9] Oelenberg also built its church in 1896. Timadeuc borrowed 25,000 francs to rebuild its church, which indeed was in need of repair. And Cîteaux was bought back at a high price in 1898. These are indications of a great spirit of faith, but perhaps also indicate a lack of awareness of the impending danger.

A misleading factor was that the Holy See's efforts at appeasement seemed to be bearing fruit between 1896 and 1898. Dom Wyart was involved with these efforts, and was appointed by the Holy Father to persuade the French bishops to support the work of moderate Republicans among Catholics, which task obliged him to go against his own convictions. But French Catholicism was too divided, and extremists on both sides undermined these attempts with their exaggerated reactions. Some Catholics preferred to force the situation rather than conciliate, and for their part, the Freemasons would not budge from their virulent anti-clericalism.

THE JULY 1901 LAW AGAINST CONGREGATIONS

The Left won the elections in 1898. France was badly torn over the Dreyfus affair, which concerned a Jewish Captain falsely charged for treason. Intransigent Catholics became involved in virulent anti-Semitism. In October 1900, Waldeck-Rousseau, head of the government, scandalized by the attitude of the Assumptionists and their newspaper *La Croix*, but also as a political move, gave a famous speech against the Congregations, which were becoming more and more powerful both in the State and in the Church. He falsely denounced their existence as a violation of the 1801 Concordat, where they are not mentioned. To get control of them, on January 15, 1901, he proposed the Law of Association to the House of Representa-

9 But the abbot died, and his successor, Dom Vital Lehodey, stopped everything, even at the price of paying heavy damages. A second, simpler, design was presented in 1899 at the General Chapter. In the end Dom Vital used the money to help the foundations in Japan and to prepare a refuge in England.

tives. This law gave the right of association to all citizens with the exception of religious, who could only associate and form a Congregation with authorization from Parliament by means of a law. Those Congregations already in existence that were not previously authorized—i.e., 149 of 154 Congregations of men and 606 of 1511 Congregations of women—had to make a formal request for authorization within three months, under penalty of being dissolved and having their property confiscated.

The law passed by a majority of 80 votes on March 29, 1901. The Senate voted it in on June 29. The President of the Republic signed it on July 1. On June 29 the Pope had written a beautiful letter to the superiors of religious Orders and Institutes, sharing their hardship, but leaving them free to decide on their own what they should do.[10]

This was indeed the question: what were they to do? Congregations could exist only with authorization, but if they requested it, they would implicitly be recognizing the law. Some Congregations, especially of teachers, knew that authorization would be refused in any case, and decided not to stoop to requesting it; rather, they chose to go into exile or to go underground by "secularizing," in order to continue their work. At first, the Jesuits said loud and clear that they would not request authorization. Others said that there was no harm in asking for authorization; if it were refused, it would be proof of the government's sectarianism.

The majority of Congregations of men adopted this stance at a meeting of their superiors in Paris and asked for authorization; the rest abstained. There were divergences among the monks. The Solesmes Congregation thought it best not to request authorization and prepared to go into exile. The Pierre-Qui-Vire province and the Lérins Congregation handed in their request for authorization. So did the Trappists. The decision was made during two meetings of French superiors on June 29, 1901, at Cîteaux and on July 16 at Paris. Dom Wyart consulted the Pope on August 14, and the Pope clearly expressed his desire that the Order ask for authorization. The decision was ratified at the 1901 General Chapter, only one vote short of unanimity. The request was made without delay (for both monks and nuns), and a series of confidential notes, written by Dom Chautard and his legal counselors, helped communities prepare their files. There was regular but discreet contact with various ministries, and at first things seemed to be going well.[11] Was it at this time that Dom Wyart met with important political figures?

10 A canonical difficulty was overcome by a circular letter from Cardinal Gotti on July 10. The government required submission to the bishops, which went contrary to exemption, but it was sufficient to refer to common ecclesiastical law regarding the bishops' oversight of the apostolate of the houses in their dioceses.

11 It is known that the Ministry backed the Trappists' request for authorization in a secret and off-the-record manner. The note of April 10, 1902 shows that our file went through various ministries and came back with favorable

It is possible that Waldek-Rousseau, wanting only to be able to control the Congregations, would have examined the authorization requests "with most benevolent liberalism," as he had promised the Holy See. But the May 1902 elections were the ruin of the Catholics, who were too compromised by their behavior in the Dreyfus affair. The new government was led by a notorious anticlerical, the 65-year-old former seminarian, Emile Combes.[12] He was willing to do away with the Congregations and to destroy the Catholicism he once professed, to the point of intransigence. "It was the only reason I took office," he said. Social reforms would come later.

Combes turned the law into an enterprise of destruction. On December 2, 1902, he presented to the House of Representatives, the most hostile to the Congregations, 54 requests, dividing them into three categories: 25 of teachers, 28 of preachers (including the 8 monasteries of the La Pierre-Qui-Vire province), and one of merchants, the Carthusians. The opinions accompanying the proposal were unfavorable to authorization. The Representatives followed these opinions: issuing three laws, one for each category, they refused authorization for the whole lot in March 1903 (they were supposed to make a law for each Congregation, but that would have taken too long). Combes also presented the House with 81 requests from women's Congregations (out of the 395 submitted). They were all rejected as a whole on June 26. By April 1, the superiors of men's Congregations were informed of the refusal of authorization. It took longer for teachers. The last monk left Pierre-Qui-Vire on May 3, 1903, to go to a refuge prepared in Belgium the year before. The most spectacular eviction, on account of popular resistance, was that of the Carthusians on April 29, 1903, immortalized by photographs.

THE TRAPPISTS' CASE SUBMITTED TO THE SENATE

On the other hand, on December 2, 1902, Combes presented the requests of five Congregations of men, this time to the Senate, recommending that they be accepted: the White Fathers, the African Missions of Lyon, the Cistercians of Lérins, the Trappists, the Brothers of Saint John of God. In order not to offend certain sensibilities, he left out a few establishments, including four of our monasteries, and added the request of a sixth Congregation that he proposed they reject.[13] The nuns were not mentioned.

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opinions to the ministry of Worship. The draft of the law authorizing the Order was nearly ready to be presented for the Representatives' vote, but there was not enough time before the May elections.

12 He did higher studies in Catholic education, doing his doctoral thesis on Saint Thomas's philosophy and on the controversy between Bernard and Abelard!

13 This sixth Congregation was that of Dom Bosco's Salesians, which, in fact, the Senate refused to authorize on July 4, 1903 by a majority of 40 votes.

Why this favorable attitude toward these five Congregations? It is understandable with regard to the missionaries whose work abroad brought prestige to France, but the monks? The Trappists had in their advantage Staouëli in Algeria and other foreign establishments in Syria, Palestine, China, Africa, Japan, Australia, America, etc. Was it because our case file was well prepared in the Worship ministry in April 1902? Was it the result of a meeting between Wyart, Combes, and the director of the Worship ministry?[14] The law states the reasons for the project: "These religious, who, by virtue of their rules, seek moral reformation in voluntary isolation and agricultural work, have provided much appreciated services in the various places where they have settled, both by clearing uncultivated land and by draining insalubrious areas, which services are arguments in favor of approving most of their establishments." The text, however, also includes conditions: these houses must abandon their industrial and commercial annexes, and limit themselves to religious and farming activities. It explicitly denounces the cheese plant at Port-du-Salut, the "musculine" of Domes,[15] the chocolate factories, and the breweries. It also imposed a limit on personnel (30 persons) and especially on foreigners (not more than one-tenth of the community). Moreover, as was already mentioned, the draft of the request singled out four abbeys, suggesting they be refused authorization: Mont-des-Cats (bad reputation, majority of foreigners, and a large brewery), Igny, Fontgombault, and Chambarand.

But the project was not necessarily bound to succeed. The Senate still needed to accept the government's opinion, without adding conditions that would endanger the abbeys' financial balance. And was it possible to save the four unapproved abbeys? The anticlerical press denounced the government's receptive attitude, and promised to keep fighting. We read in *L'Avenir*, May 24, 1903: "We have managed to gather a very interesting file on the members of the congregation of Soligny-la-Trappe (Orne), and we will publish it. We will also enlighten the Senate. . . . Because the Carthusians are dissolved as a commercial congregation, there is no reason to authorize another commercial congregation like the Trappists. A bit of logic please." May 17 was a "Free Press" day, with over 200 meetings held throughout the country. The anticlerical leaders of these gatherings demanded abolition of the Congregations, and went so far as disrupting Masses in some places.

14 Two 1909 letters of Dom Chautard mention this meeting (see the appendix). But it is difficult to say when the meeting occurred. Combes was Worship minister in 1895. But at that time, the Trappists were resisting the "loi d'abonnement," so why would Dom Wyart have wanted to meet the minister and director of the worship ministry? Was it, then, after May 1902 (Dom Wyart did go to Paris from Sept-Fons on June 21, and from Cîteaux on July 17–18)? It is also conceivable that these meetings took place separately, and that the first one was with Charles Dumay, director of worship under the leftist governments since 1887, in late 1901, when there were contacts with this ministry.

15 A sort of fruit paste containing raw meat, well known as an energizing dietary supplement.

Dom Chautard, asked by Dom Wyart to organize the defense of the Trappists, was able to gather a great deal of documentation in the abbeys, with which he put together a 25-page brochure addressed to the members of the Senate. He reminds them of what a Trappist monastery is, of the meaning of a contemplative vocation, and of how it is organized (emphasizing the monks' freedom), and goes on to justify their manual labor, elaborating on the services they render and will continue render in the future. He stresses the need for industries, in order to pay the debts they have incurred, and in order to sustain their communities and those in foreign lands (Palestine, Syria, etc.). He then lists the characteristics of each house, refuting the objections raised against the four communities called into question. Aware that a Senate commission headed by Clemenceau was to study the draft of the law, he tried to meet with him in February of 1903, in order to know on what points to focus in his plea. Clemenceau received him, aggressively at first, but in the end was captivated by Chautard's passionate presentation of the Trappist vocation.[16] Clemenceau allowed him to meet with the commission.

On three occasions—March 17 and 18 and June 19 (Feast of the Sacred Heart), 1903—Dom Chautard met with the commission and answered the senators' questions, which focused especially on the industries and businesses that could harm manufacturers and merchants in the areas around monasteries.[17] It was time for the parliamentary recess, so it was expected that the law would be discussed in the October session, but none of the five Congregations approved by the government was placed on the program of the proceedings.

How much influence did Dom Chautard's plea have on this result? It is hard to say. It is clear that if the government's opinion had been negative, as it was for the Salesians, there would have been no second chances. Fr. Bologne, an associate of Don Bosco, was unable to obtain a hearing in the senate commission. The Abbot of Sept-Fons might have influenced this commission and its president, but the commission had opted for provisional acceptance of a small minority, as was the case with the other four Congregations. As for the decision to postpone discussion in the Senate, the same decision applied to these four Congregations, for whom Dom Chautard had not intervened. The decision also had to do with the political calendar at a time when more urgent matters clamored for attention. As for the government, it put off until later the Chamber's study of the requests still

16 Chautard recounted his meeting with Clemenceau in a conference given in 1931. See Chautard, *Les Cisterciens-Trappistes, L'âme cistercienne*.

17 The archives of La Trappe contain a copy of the session reports in which the Trappists' request was dealt with. It should be noted that the superior of Lérins also met with the commission, which voted favorably, 8 votes against 7. It voted in favor the Trappists, 9 votes against 7. A June 19, 1903 letter from Dom Symphorien reports precise details—received, obviously, from Chautard—on the situation (see appendix).

waiting on the desk of the minister of Worship.[18] In July 1903, Waldeck-Rousseau had publicly made sharp criticism of Combes's actions regarding the Congregations, saying he had turned a "control law" into an "exclusion law." He criticized him for applying the law, not with wisdom and moderation, but brutally, with kicks and blows. Was this speech in the Senate the reason for the postponement? In point of fact, it was the object of a pointed reply from Clemenceau himself, approving of Combes's policies.

Teaching institutes were a much greater worry to those in power,[19] and they fought against Catholic organizations in various ways. The aims of their fight shifted the field of action. Beginning in November 1903, the Senate was asked to examine a draft that would later become the law of July 7, 1904. Each year, up until 1909, anticlerical measures were proposed, requiring discussion time and mobilizing the efforts of members of parliament. The highpoint was reached in 1905 with the law separating Church and State, which law triggered the taking of "inventories" on ecclesiastical property in the churches, amid popular resistance and worrying incidents in various regions.[20]

Nonetheless, the postponement of discussion in the Senate was in itself only temporary. It is possible that afterwards Clemenceau, who led the government from 1906 to 1909, had some influence on the scheduling of Senate debates. Dom Chautard continued to be in contact with him. Discussion on the Congregations was to be taken up again in 1914. The Abbot of Sept-Fons wrote on February 20: "Serious threats of exile, a more serious alert than ever." A visit at Bricquebec by the sub-prefect of Valognes, in May 1914, seemed to indicate that eviction would soon follow. Maubec was also on the list of upcoming banishments. In June-July, the new government was determined to have done with the Congregations. It was Clemenceau's opinion that there were more urgent things to do, and he even suggested to Dom Chautard that he go to Brazil to win time (because they would do nothing without consulting him, and would have to wait for his return). A few months later Dom Marre wrote Chautard, thanking him for once again saving the Order: he had had occasion to exchange a few words with the minister Joseph Caillaux, president of the radical party, on the liner that took him to Brazil.

18 At least this was the case for 314 Congregations of women. On August 9, 1903, at the "democratic banquet" at Marseille, after boasting that he had abolished the teaching and preaching Congregations, considered the most dangerous, Combes added: "It remains for us to give rulings on the hospital and contemplative Congregations, and we are now putting together drafts of laws concerning them. Parliament can take its time discussing something of less urgent concern…."

19 In September of 1904, Combes boasted of having closed down 13,904 religious teaching establishments.

20 There was even a death at Boschoepe, near Mont-des-Cats, on March 6, 1906, which brought on the fall of the government in May. It was then that Clemenceau became Minister of the Interior, and then President of the Council.

THE PRECARIOUSNESS OF THE COMMUNITIES' SITUATIONS

The situation of those Congregations that had made their request for authorization in 1901 and had not received negative responses was precarious. Dom Chautard was aware of it more than anyone,[21] and the situation would remain the same until the war in 1914. Of course, the Congregations were not illegal and, by having requested authorization, had not been dissolved, but they nonetheless had no legal status and could be abolished at any moment by a government ruling. In some places they could expect petty annoyances from local prefects or members of parliament who were hostile toward the monks.

Some monasteries did in fact disappear, like Fontgombault (the monks left for America) and Espira-de-L'Agli (the nuns took refuge in Spain, coming back to Échourgnac in 1922). Saint-Paul-aux-Bois had to go into exile in Belgium, first at Fourbechies, then at Chimay. E. Combes signed a decree of eviction for the nuns of Gardes on July 10, 1904, even though they had received legal recognition.[22] They were expected to have everything settled by October 1, and some nuns had already gone to other monasteries, especially Belval, or were setting up a refuge in England. But the liquidation of property was delayed, and the monastery of Gardes was not sold until 1907. Some sisters, however (16 elderly and infirm and 10 to take care of them), managed to stay on as tenants of the State, without being allowed to receive new recruits.[23] Chambarand, under threat from local authorities and pursued by creditors, willingly closed in 1907, in the hopes of avoiding the same fate as the nearby Grande-Chartreuse. Staouëli, fearing for its survival, accepted the offer of property on Majorca in 1903, but ended up going to Maguzzano in the north of Italy (various causes were involved, e.g., material difficulties and spiritual dangers due to the environment).

CAUTIONARY MEASURES TAKEN BY THE MONASTERIES

Several monasteries took various kinds of precautions. Already in the last decades of the nineteenth century La Grande Trappe had reduced publicity of its indus-

21 At the 1904 Chapter, he said there was little hope for our being authorized. He promised to do his best to delay the vote of the Chambers, which could have been unfavorable, and to try to save at least those monasteries that had no industries.

22 By housing a small girls' school at the monastery to smooth the way, they received recognition in 1854, using the already-approved constitutions of the Fontevriste sisters of Chemillé, who were teachers. But it was precisely this arrangement that provoked Combes's aggression in 1904, despite the sisters' assurances that they were not really teachers. This same sort of confusion brought on the eviction of the communities of Espira and Saint-Paul-aux-Bois with the law of July 1904.

23 The habit was given at night, in a clandestine way…

tries and had even sold its chocolate factory to one of its employees. In 1914, the abbot again looked into a possible refuge in Hungary. Dom Chautard of Sept-Fons, having already looked for places in Belgium, Scotland, and Poland, made a foundation in Brazil on August 19, 1904 (Maristella).[24] Dom Candide, of Désert, had the library and all but the necessary furniture stored with friends of the community, and accepted a property bequest in the north of Spain, which would later become Viaceli. A good dozen monks' communities bought property in foreign countries, and the 1903 General Chapter encouraged the nuns to do the same. The 1904 Chapter was more reassuring, but it nonetheless advised chaplains to wear the cassock and for their laybrother assistants to dress as seculars. Beginning in 1902, lists of proposals and practical advice about establishing refuge houses circulated in the Order. The refuges that were established generally lasted twenty years. Saint-Romuald, Bonneval's refuge in Canada, became an autonomous community, as did Calvaire, Bonnecombe's refuge.

But the declaration of war on August 2, 1914 was a turning point. France needed all of her sons to form a "sacred union" against the enemy. The same day, a circular letter from the minister of the interior, Malvy, who was nevertheless strongly anticlerical, suspended until further notice all measures taken following the laws of 1901 and 1904.

After victory in 1918, it was no longer possible to take up the fight against religious and members of the clergy in the same way, because they had fulfilled their duties both at the front and behind the lines. Many had served as stretcher-bearers, nurses, or chaplains. Several monasteries housed hospitals for wounded soldiers. The camaraderie and fraternity of the trenches had also lessened anticlerical sentiments among former combatants. Many exiles returned, taking advantage of the tolerance introduced by Malvy's circular of August 2, 1914, even without actual authorization, the laws still being in force. The monasteries' refuge houses were closed in the 1920s. There were still some warning signs in 1922, when the question of authorization was again put on the agenda. And especially there was an alert in 1924 following the elections in which the radical left emerged as the winner: the new head of government, Edoard Herriot, made known his intention to apply the laws against the Congregations. At that point, the religious superiors organized themselves in defense of the rights of religious who had fought in the war ("droits des religieux anciens combattants" or DRAC), making their famous statement, "We will not leave." But the religious climate in France gradually changed in the period between the two world wars. There was a rapprochement between Catholics and moderate Republicans. Diplomatic relations with the Vatican, broken off

24 In 1924, for lack of local recruitment, the community was closed. The monks, after trying to settle in Portugal, repopulated Orval in 1927.

in 1904, were restored in 1921, which prevented Clemenceau, who was against it, from being chosen as candidate for the presidency of the Republic.

A solution had nearly been negotiated when World War II broke out. Nonetheless, on February 21, 1941, Marshal Pétain granted legal recognition to the Carthusians, who could then return to France. Also, by the law of April 8, 1942, he finally changed the 1901 law, which meant that non-authorized Congregations were no longer to be pursued or condemned. Thus, they could, but were not obliged to, request State recognition as juridical persons, as the 1901 law had established. But this recognition would be granted, not by a legislative act, but by a simple government ruling with the opinion of the State Council. In fact, however, it was not until Pompidou's 1970 directive that such requests could effectively be made and accepted. At present, most monasteries in France have obtained legal recognition.

APPENDIX: SOME UNPUBLISHED DOCUMENTS ON THESE EVENTS (FROM THE ARCHIVES OF THE GENERALATE)

a) Excerpts from Two "Confidential Notes" Sent to the Monasteries in 1901–1902

November 2, 1901: "For the discussion in the Chambers, the official deliberation of the Municipal Council will be more important than the opinion of the Prefecture. The purpose of this latter, indeed, is to inform the ministry. But many Municipal Councils seem to fear being seen as pro-clergy or anti-government if they give a favorable opinion. In this case it would be good, with discretion and firmness, to make it known to the Mayor and all the councilors that one of the circumstances of the submission of the request for authorization was invitation of the Minister himself and *his statement (secret and off the record) that he intended to back the Trappists' request for authorization*. The Municipal Councils will therefore agree with the present Minister of the Interior and vote in favor. Once we have this favorable vote "as a Congregation," we are advised to have them include in the statement that "out of respect for the truth, the Council declares that the establishment in no way interferes with the population of the Commune" or even "that it is in fact a charitable entity." Failing this, we should see to it that the Council either state that "without voting for the maintenance of the Religious, it refrains from asking for their abolition," or at least that it limit itself to stating "that it trusts the Government's wisdom on the question submitted to it." Getting this last neutral vote proposed could perhaps suffice to avoid a negative vote."

November 24, 1902: "Several carefully checked sources of information lead us to believe that the Government remains *in favor of the request for authorization made*

by our Order. Most of the Prefects have sent in their reports to the Ministry. Although we do not know the details, we are sure that they are on the whole very satisfactory. However, given the conclusions of several of these reports, it seems wise to be prudent about receiving any new foreigners. Our file is now being examined by the Ministry of Agriculture. It will then move on to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The draft of the special law for our authorization is being studied and there was serious question of turning it over to Parliament next March or April. One way or the other, everything indicates that the discussion will take place only after the elections, and if the majority of the new Chamber is no more irreligious than the present one, the Government counts on having this law voted in. […]" (Unfortunately, the May elections brought in a much more anticlerical Chamber).

b) The June 20, 1903 Letter of Dom Symphorien Bernigaud, Secretary of Dom Wyart

(*The day after his appearance before the Senate Commission on June 19, 1903, Dom Chautard reported to Dom Wyart, who was at Laval. Dom Symphorien, the Abbot General's secretary, wrote an update to the Procurator in Rome.*)

On the feast of Saint Lutgard (June 16), the Senate Commission, as you know, voted for our Order's authorization in principle. It still remained to examine the file of each monastery and give a ruling on each of our houses.

Yesterday, on the feast of the Sacred Heart, the Commission met for that purpose. They listened to our Rev. Fr. Jean-Baptiste with the same benevolence as the other times. All the members rose when he left, and remained standing until he had gone out the door. All bowed to him as a parting gesture. These are details, but are not without significance, because these gentlemen have been less courteous with others.

There was not enough time to vote. They have to meet again, first, to vote on 20 houses, second, to examine four other houses, and, third, to formulate various conditions on authorization. So far, all seems to be going well.

It is agreed that, first, they will only go so far as to make us refuse foreigners in the future, allowing those now present to stay on, up to a limit of one per ten members. Thus the practice of admitting foreigners will die out.

Second, all industry, even agriculture, will be forbidden. They are intractable on this point. But by joining dairy unions, we will be able to keep our cheese plants through cooperatives. As for flourmills, we could get nothing out of them. Dom Jean-Baptiste is trying to persuade Mr. Lourtiès, who is less strict, to get them to allow us to mill what customers bring to us.

Third, the law will forbid us to help the secular clergy or to have schools.

Fourth, there is still some hope for the four houses, even for Fontgombault, Igny, and Mont-des-Cats. They will be voted on next week. The hasty departure of Fontgombault had a regrettable effect.

Fifth, Senator Pochon, of l'Ain, presented a voluminous and hateful case file on Dombes. It appears that Rev. Fr. Jean-Baptiste wore the man down with just the right documents brought by the Rev. Fr. prior when he appeared before the Commission. […]

c) Dom Chautard's Letter

On the ocean liner *Atlantique*, May 19, [1909], [addressed to Dom Wyart's sister]

> […] I feel the need to ask you to tell M. Ficaux [who was working on a biography of Dom Wyart] not to say anything about the meeting with Dumay (much less the one with Combes!). It would certainly be against Dom Sebastien's wishes. I was the only witness of these two meetings, and the only one aware of how they arose. Two years ago I heard some absolutely false and fanciful details. If our dear and venerated Mr. Fichaux insists, he should at least let me provide him with documentation and give grounds for my opinion about keeping the matter silent. […]

This letter shows that several other persons were also aware of these meetings. But the political climate called for caution. In the end, Fichaux made no mention of them.

2.3. THE FIRST TWO ABBOTS GENERAL

2.3.1. Dom Sébastien Wyart

Dom Sébastien Wyart's activities as Abbot General have been presented along with the history of the Order's reunification in 1892 and in connection with the various steps he took, leading up to Leo XIII's recognition of the fully Cistercian character of the new canonical Order in 1902 (see chapter 1). Dom Sébastien could then return to the Lord, whom he so well served; his task was completed.

It still remains to take note of some of the characteristics of Dom Sébastien's personality, which is paradoxically far removed from what one might expect of a

man who became Abbot General of his Order and played such an important role in the 1892 unification. In fact, he hesitated for a long time about his vocation, which was in such contrast with his temperament. As even his closest collaborator put it,[25] he was never really a contemplative. Of course he was deeply pious, and his activity did not prevent him from having an interior life, but it was more along the lines of an apostolic religious. If he finally resolved to commit himself once and for all to Trappist life, he still had it in mind that he could play an active role, through preaching retreats, for example. As an abbot, he often spoke about zeal for souls, and praised the houses in mission countries that engaged in charitable works (Mariannhill for example). He would have liked the monasteries of the Order to be involved in a certain amount of apostolic work. The authors that inspired him were not those of the monastic tradition (he did not care for reading Rancé, which was in fashion in his Congregation); they were more classical authors like Francis de Sales, Fr. Faber, and the Imitation of Christ. He had little knowledge of the Order's history or laws. He cultivated his love for the saints and entrusted himself to them. He often called on his guardian angel. Although he was not much of a reader, he was faithful to reading Scripture and got a lot out of Dom Guéranger's *The Liturgical Year*. Above all, he did not feel bound by the methods and formation schemes in vogue at the time. He preferred to follow the inspiration of the moment. His impulsive character prevented him from being a good spiritual director, able to follow a person's evolution over a long period of time. But his words inspired enthusiasm and did much good. No doubt, with another temperament Dom Sébastien would have been a good monk, but then he would not have carried out the work to which God had destined him and for which God had called him to a monastic life so out of keeping with his character. God's ways are unfathomable.

HIS YOUTH

Henri Wyart was born in Bouchain (Département du Nord) on October 11, 1839. He began his studies at the age of twelve with his paternal uncle, the curate of Mazinghien. After a short time in the minor seminary at Cambrai, he was sent to the Collège Notre-Dame at Valenciennes as a third year student. Then, in 1859, he began teaching at the secondary school in Tourcoing, which became a sort of second family for him. He was well liked wherever he went. A sensitive person, he perceived that it would please his father, who was rather ill, if he went into Orders. He asked to be made a cleric, without, however, feeling an irresistable vocation to

25 Dom Symporien Bernigaud was a monk of Sept-Fons, sent to the foundation of Catacombs (Rome), then made secretary of the new Abbot General, and then Definitor in 1898. See his notes (kept in the archives of the Generalate) addressed to Msgr. Fichaux, who wrote a life of Dom Wyart in 1910. This section is based on those notes.

that way of life. But, in 1860, hearing about the volunteers going to Rome to defend the Holy See, he decided, with his director's assent, to enroll with the Pontifical Zouaves. By then, his father had died, so, having received his mother's blessing at Bouchain, he set out for the Eternal City, where he arrived in mid-May, 1860.

MILITARY LIFE

Along with the young recruits, he was introduced to Pius IX, who wished them all the valor and success of David fighting Goliath. He immediately joined up with the large battalion camped at Terni. Henri thus began by getting acquainted with the rough life of the camp. The commander was uncompromising about regulations, to which he required strict adherence. But events were rushing ahead: he took part in the battle of Castelfidardo on September 18, 1860, during which he was wounded on the neck and arm. It was his baptism by fire. Hospitalized in Italy, then back in France to convalesce, he returned to service in February 1861, and was promoted corporal, then sergeant, and was at the same time decorated with the "Pro Petri Sede" cross and made a knight of Pius IX. At first it was life in the garrisons at Agnani, Rome, and Anzio, where Pius IX came to visit the troops to the joy of all, and then the Roman campaign, with an interlude in the battle of Ceprano. Henry Wyart delighted in recalling memories of pursuing brigands in the mountains of the Papal State at the end of 1865. He became sub-lieutenant on March 17, 1866, and lieutenant at the beginning of 1867. That was the year Garibaldi disembarked in southern Italy and worked his way up to Rome, while the Italians attacked from the North. Wyart distinguished himself in the battle of Bagnoregio near Montefiascone on October 5, 1867, and again on November 3 at Mentana in a bayonet assault. A few days later he was made captain and was decorated with the cross of Saint Gregory. A year later, when the Zouaves reorganized, he assisted the commander of the fourth battalion as chief master sergeant. A lull made it possible to hold the First Vatican Council, which opened on December 8, 1869. The Zouaves formed an honor guard for the Prelates as they entered Saint Peter's. But the Council ended abruptly after the proclamation of papal infallibility on July 18, 1870. War was declared between France and Prussia. This war threatened to be disastrous for the Papal States: the great Catholic powers abandoned the Pope, and Victor Emmanuel II even cynically announced his intention of occupying Rome. It was no longer possible to defend what remained of the Papal States, so the Zouaves reluctantly withdrew to Rome, determined to put up a fierce resistance against the attackers. Wyart had no delusions, and he prepared his mother for the worst:

> We are all alone and few in number, but we will fight with all the more bravery and pride. If, later on, Garibaldi's men and the Italians come back, I pray God that you will be brave: these will probably be terrible battles. You know well that I will do my duty, have no doubts. I am pleased to say that I am ready for anything. For six years God has armed me with the shield of faith, and I am convinced that I hold a sword, not out of self-interest or for an unimportant cause, but in God's service. The sacraments have kept me on the straight path and away from wrongful passions. Whatever happens, you will have the consolation of knowing that I can appear before Jesus Christ, our only goal and our only love.

Wyart's battalion was assigned to defend a neighborhood in the south of Rome, from the Lateran to the outpost of San-Gallo, beyond the San Sebastiano gate. But there was no combat. On September 20, 1870, as soon as a breach was opened in the north of Rome, the white flag was raised by order of the Pope, who wanted to avoid any useless shedding of blood. Seething with rage, the Zouaves, disconcerted but disciplined, watched the cohort of the riotous invaders pass by, without being able to oppose them. Taken prisoner, but sent to France with his companions and countrymen, Wyart, as a officer, was on a French frigate at Civitavecchia by September 22.

Back in their homeland, the Zouaves placed themselves at the service of France, then at war, becoming the Legion of Volunteers of the West. Wyart took part in combat near Orleans (Cercottes) and in the Perche region, then near Mans, which prevented the Prussians from taking the city. But on January 28, 1971, Paris capitulated, which meant there would be an armistice. Wyart's regiment was in the process of regrouping at Rennes. General Charette consecrated the regiment to the Sacred Heart on Pentecost, 1871. This was his swan song. The Legion that refused to be absorbed into the French Republican Army for ideological reasons was dissolved.

THE MONK: DISCERNMENT AND FORMATION

Having laid aside his Zouave uniform, Henri Wyart wondered what he would do. For several months he hesitated and sought advice. Rejecting the idea of going to the seminary or joining the Jesuits, he rather abruptly set out for Mont-des-Cats, without even going to kiss his mother goodbye. He applied on February 5, 1872, wanting to be accepted as a laybrother, because at the age of thirty-two and having left studies behind long ago, he no longer felt suited for the priesthood. But it

was as a postulant for the choir that the abbot accepted him into the novitiate on February 12.

In actual fact, the novitiate and his first years of monastic life were not easy for the captain, who had now become Br. Sébastien. Many times he wondered if Trappist life was for him. He liked to think that the Pope would still need his Zouaves and that he would be allowed to leave…. Eleven years in the army had left its mark on his character and his tastes. It has been said that if he had lived like a monk as a Zouave, he nevertheless remained a Zouave when he became a monk. It was not so much the regulations that bothered him: he was used to military discipline and remained a stickler in that regard all his life. But to renounce his own will in everything was another matter. He took a dislike for everything, and others became unbearable for him. In order to reduce the tension of the crisis situation he was struggling with, the superiors appointed him assistant guest master. Finally, when the abbot was ready to let him leave, Sébastien asked to stay, wanting to embrace the cross. But a visit from General Charette in July 1873 rekindled nostalgia for the past. Nonetheless, in November, in response to Sébastien's request, the abbot, now reassured, said he thought him to be called to Trappist life. For Sébastien that was enough: God had spoken through his superior, "whatever the cost, I will be a Trappist." On February 12, 1874, with the blessing of Pius IX, who had been informed through Charette, he gave himself entirely to God and Mary by means of simple but perpetual vows.[26] Shortly after that he was officially appointed guest master.

But during the regular visitation in April 1875, the abbot of Sept-Fons suggested that Br. Sébastien be sent to Rome for studies in view of the priesthood. The abbot of Mont-des-Cats dreaded this departure, and with good reason: would it not bring him back into contact with former acquaintances? Would not the proximity of the Vatican and Pius IX rekindle the fervor of the Zouave? As a safety measure, the abbot of Sept-Fons, who was Vicar of the Congregation, appointed Br. Sébastien secretary to the Procurator in Rome.

He thus set out, arriving in the Eternal City on May 3, 1875. Not without joy did he return to places so dear to his heart. Three weeks later he was invited, along with many others, to meet the Pope during his walk and recreation. Pius IX, as is well known, wanted to be close to his people. There was another audience on May 26, this time a private one. Having already spoken with a Jesuit, who was to be his director and who did not believe in his vocation, Wyart revealed his doubts to the Pope and asked his opinion. The Holy Father replied frankly that he was not made

26 At that time, first vows were perpetual but "simple." They could be suspended by the superiors of the Order. They were followed a few years later, three years at most, by solemn vows, for which only the Holy See could give dispensation for serious reasons.

for Trappist life but for the active life. Oddly enough, although Dom Wyart was always careful to accept the guidance of an authoritative word and would always see the word of the Pope—for whom he had the highest respect—as stronger than any other, he was not convinced by his opinion. Asked again, the Pope, probably a bit surprised this time, referred the matter to the Sacred Penitentiary. The Penitentiary wisely responded that the best person to judge the vocation of a monk is his abbot . . ., who upheld the positive opinion he had given in November 1873. Pius IX took no offense, and met with Wyart again on August 10, addressing him with the familiar *tu* and conversing freely with him for 45 minutes. His friendship with Msgr. Macchi, who arranged the Pope's audiences, allowed him frequent visits, and he quickly become a familiar guest.

Life at the Procurator's residence was simple. The community consisted of only the Procurator, his two secretaries, and a lay brother. There were no offices in common and no spiritual conferences. When the school year began, Wyart frequented the German College, but at his age it was difficult to get back into studies, especially for someone with such an active temperament. He had plenty of elbowroom and did as he pleased. He did not attend all the university courses, preferring tutorial study with the Jesuit Frs. Caretti and Liberatore.

With the approach of the sub-deaconate, which involved a definitive commitment to celibacy, he once again had occasion to reflect on his vocation. An experience of intense joy before the image of Our Lady of Perpetual Help on August 17, 1876, carried the decision. He was ordained sub-deacon on December 23, 1876, deacon on February 24, 1877, and priest on Saturday March 31 at the Lateran, in the midst of 110 ordinands.

At the end of the school year, Fr. Sébastien prepared to return to Mont-des-Cats according to his abbot's wishes. But at a farewell audience he had requested with the Holy Father, the Pope said that two years of theology was not enough and that he ordered him to complete the doctorate. Fr. Sébastien therefore remained in Rome for three more years. He received the licentiate on July 20, 1879 and the doctorate on March 4, 1880. Pius IX was no longer in this world. Leo XIII had succeeded him on February 20, 1878. Wyart still had to prepare his "confession exam," which he passed in November. He then hastened to return to Mont-des-Cats, which was threatened with eviction by the government's anticlerical policies.

ABBOT AT MONT-DES-CATS AND AT SEPT-FONS

The French government, in a decree on March 29, 1880, had in fact decided to abolish the non-authorized religious Congregations, which entailed the eviction of several communities of the Order in November of that same year, as mentioned

above (§ 2.2). Arriving at Mont-des-Cats, Fr. Sébastien found the community barricaded in for fear of a police raid. But there was no intervention, because the civil authorities realized that they would be up against resistance from the local population, which was prepared to fend off any aggression.

It was nevertheless prudent to prepare a place of refuge outside of the country in case of need. This task was assigned to Fr. Sébastien even before he made his solemn vows on Christmas Eve of 1880. It took him several months, but the result was the foundation of Tilburg in March 1881. Dom Dominique Lacaes, whose strength was failing him, was concerned about his succession. Wishing to keep Fr. Sébastien at Mont-des-Cats, he appointed him prior.

On the morning of January 2, 1883, while reading the gospel at the end of Vigils, the abbot had a weak spell. Supported by the sub-prior, he nevertheless finished the reading and prayed the final prayer before being carried to his room. But he still wanted to speak to the community the next day in chapter. The following day he received the last sacraments, and on January 5, eve of the Epiphany, he died at 4 in the morning. The election on January 30 did not take long: the prior was elected without difficulty. He received the abbatial blessing on 26 August in the privacy of the monastery. In his coat of arms, he naturally placed the Sacred Heart, to whom the Zouaves were consecrated, with the motto *trahe nos*.

His active temperament was able to blossom in his abbatial duties, which he conceived along the lines of military authority, adapted to the context of religious life. As an officer, he knew how to make himself liked by his men, but he also knew how to enforce respect for hierarchical authority. Already as prior, he could not countenance being proclaimed in the chapter of faults. But he often achieved his aims by using his natural charm with subordinates. He had concern for his apostolate and even made himself weak to save the weak. As Saint Benedict asks, he preferred being loved to being feared.

Following the advice of Pius IX, one of his concerns as abbot was the intellectual formation of monks destined for the priesthood. To that end, he asked help of the Jesuits. But the project was not carried out until 1888, and lasted for only one year. The Jesuit fathers required larger classes, and the abbots of other communities were not willing to send their young monks to Mont-des-Cats.

In November of the same year as his election, Dom Wyart was called on to make a foundation near Rome. The proposal came from high up. The famous archeologist Rossi had realized that the workers he employed in his discoveries of the catacombs were involved in organized trafficking of relics. When this problem was brought to his attention, the Pope thought that the Trappists should settle on the site to protect it. The Procurator was informed, and he in turn passed the matter on to the two Vicars of the Trappist Congregations. But doubting the abilities

of these latter, he also referred the matter to Dom Wyart, his former companion at arms with the Zouaves. Dom Wyart hesitated, but when the Holy See insisted, and when the Pope made it known that this cause was particularly pleasing to him, he set out for Rome. On January 26, 1884, a contract was signed between the Vatican and Mont-des-Cats, which contract, to tell the truth, involved great expense for the monks. Dom Wyart sent four monks, all former Zouaves, and other abbots sent a few people. The General Chapter allowed him to oversee the community in person by settling there for a whole year under the condition of returning to Mont-des-Cats twice in that time.

On March 18, 1884, Leo XIII met with the whole community. This audience gave spiritual encouragement, but it did nothing to ease the material difficulties.[27] The building campaign and regular life began in 1885, and Dom Wyart spent nearly the whole year at Catacombs. The financial situation was difficult and gave him serious worries. As for their guardianship of the catacombs, the monks did not yet have even the key, much less the income. Instead, the community came down with malaria. Dom Wyart himself caught the disease and had to return to Mont-des-Cats in the autumn of 1885, and he spent two months between life and death. But by November he set off again, urgently requested to return following the accidental death of a monk, killed under a collapsed wall (it was Fr. Valérien, formerly lieutenant Dujardin, a friend of captain Wyart). He remained until the hot summer months in 1886. That November he returned again to the catacombs for nine straight months, without obtaining from the Holy See the solution to the questions on which the community's future depended. The solution would come only later.

On October 9, 1887, the General Chapter accepted the resignation of the Vicar General of the Congregation and chose Dom Wyart to replace him in that office. But shortly after, Dom Jerome Guenat also resigned as abbot of Sept-Fons. On October 28, the community of Sept-Fons elected Dom Wyart as its abbot.

He was not immediately replaced at Mont-des-Cats, and he remained administrator of Catacombs. He had to provide regular visitations for the daughter houses of Sept-Fons and Mont-des-Cats. Catacombes became an autonomous priory only in 1888, and it was not until June 15, 1889 that a new abbot was elected at Mont-des-Cats.[28] But in October 1892, Dom Wyart was himself elected first Abbot General of the new Order formed by the three Trappist Congregations.

27 It should be mentioned that during this audience Leo XIII spoke at length about uniting the Trappist Congregations, which gave Dom Wyart further motivation for pursuing the unification of the Order, the great work of his life.

28 But the 1888 General Chapter allowed him to delegate all his powers as prior to Fr. Jerome Parent, who was elected abbot in 1889.

He remained abbot of Sept-Fons until June 14, 1899. He was therefore frequently away, but he managed to keep up the spirits of the monks of Sept-Fons, who appreciated him. Later on, speaking of Dom Sébastien's abbacy at Sept-Fons, Dom Chautard stated:

> Dom Sébastien was rarely here. But when he came it was an event. He filled the house. He filled the air. This engaging man brightened up all the work places he visited during those weeks, and with God's sunlight enlivened those who lived there, bringing them, as it were, a ray of light from the presence of our Lord. During those times, he met with each of the choir monks and lay brothers for direction. With a one week stay at Sept-Fons he did as much for the refocusing of the interior life, for progress in the love of Jesus and Mary, for zeal for the observances, for peace, charity, study, etc., as another abbot could do with three months' residence. […] They eagerly looked forward to his chapters. It was as if they paid for their seats in advance. Everyone came as if for a holiday. The chapters were sometimes very long, but they always seemed to end too soon. He had no prepared outline, and often Dom Sébastien did not even have a key thought in mind when he took his place in the abbot's seat. He looked at the sons God had entrusted to him. His heart wrapped them in a warm ray of light. That was all he needed to do: with his open, generous expression, he could go on forever. The softhearted father would give way to the matchless storyteller. From a passionate, vibrant preacher, at times with a military—I nearly said "Zouave"—energy and frankness, he seamlessly transitioned to being a splendid lecturer or dazzling charmer. After the former lieutenant major had dispensed the observations, comments, and reproaches he had gathered on his rounds in the abbey, he went on to be the ardent devotee of the Sacred Heart or of Mary Immaculate, charging his audience with emotion…[29]

Nonetheless, his charisma did not always make up for the disadvantages of his absences, especially in the area of material administration. In order to increase the resources of the Sept-Fons community, he decided to establish a brewery, since it had worked for him at Tilburg. But he was not able to keep close enough tabs on things, and had to trust his lay and religious collaborators, who were not always up to the task, not to mention the fact that the people of the Bourbonnais region did not drink as much beer as in Holland. The situation quickly deteriorated and became a torment for Dom Wyart. The election of Dom Chautard—who took two

29 Letter of January 2, 1909 to canon Fichaux, Archives of the Generalate.

months before accepting, and only did so by order of the Pope—to succeed him got him out of a mess, but created a new one for his successor.

ABBOT GENERAL

From his days of military service, Dom Sébastien carried over a sense of *esprit de corps*: he loved his Order and tried to obtain the esteem of everyone for the glory of God and man, sometimes going so far as to adjust the statistics to make an impression. Thanks to his dynamism, a great deal was accomplished during his time in office, especially the drafting and approval of the Constitutions and Usages (see chapter 1, above).

He traveled extensively and set about visiting all the monasteries of France, Belgium, Holland, Algeria, and Austria. But he did not cross the ocean. He spent six or seven months of the year traveling. Nevertheless, persecution in France was always on his mind and worried him a great deal (see § 2.2, above). Leo XIII even entrusted him with a mission to the bishops of France, in order to foster the emergence of a moderate Catholic party that could oppose the radical and liberal anti-clericals; for him it was an unpleasant task. Notes in the margins of his Ordo make it possible to trace his steps from 1894 to October 1903, from which point he was too ill ever to leave Rome again.[30]

The running of the Order was mostly a matter of charity, as his secretary attested: "He never allowed me a bitter word when answering the letters of reprimand, complaint, reproach, and insult. Some abbots in the Order caused him dreadful suffering. He always advised me to answer them with a *good* letter; it was the expression he always used, sometimes causing general hilarity." At Rome his door was always open. He liked to have guests, and extemporized a great deal, so much so that his collaborators, whenever they were in a hurry, avoided stopping in, for fear of not being able to get away without hurting him.

This charity extended beyond the Order to all who sought his help. He was generous, and no one will ever know how much he gave away in alms. He sometimes covered the debts of other houses. Unfortunately his administration left much to be desired. He borrowed more than he could pay back, and sometimes went so far as to sign guarantees in the Order's name, which he did not have the right to do. Thus he left a huge amount of debt. His successor, Dom Augustine Marre, revealed this fact to the 1905 General Chapter, stating that he could not and would not take responsibility for it. It was the result of Dom Sébastien's charity, but a charity that ought to have been combined with prudence and counsel.

30 But the 1901 Ordo has not been found.

SICKNESS AND DEATH

Early on in his time as Abbot General, his health began to fail, and he was affected by diabetes. This sickness, according to Dom Symphorien, probably worsened on account of fatigue, especially the grief caused him by the affairs of the Church in France and by the financial situation at Sept-Fons. However, he was incapable of maintaining the necessary diet. Little by little his kidneys failed, causing nervous fits and heart palpitations. On October 17, 1899, on a visit to Mont-des-Cats, he became seriously ill. They feared for his life, but he quickly recovered and set off for Rome, where he arrived on December 10. Another health crisis soon followed. By February 1900 he was doing better, but he remained in Rome, except for the General Chapter in September. He was able to make a few regular visitations in 1901, but his eyesight was failing bit by bit.

The year 1902, however, was not exactly restful: he obtained from Leo XIII the Apostolic Letter *Non mediocri* (see § 2.1), which was intended to put an end to denials of the Order's Cistercian character on the part of the Common Observance. Too tired to do so himself, he charged Dom Chautard with defending the Trappists of France against threats of eviction following the law of July 1901 (see § 2.2). But he did not lose interest entirely: he visited the communities from May through late November, in order to reassure them. Having become nearly blind, he had successful cataract surgery on one of his eyes, July 2, 1903, at Laval. He was nevertheless exhausted, and his spirits were also affected, according to his close associates. Back in Rome on October 2, 1903, he never left Rome again. He wanted to have the operation on the other eye in May 1904, but he did not have the strength for it. The last two weeks of his life were hard. "Whereas before he loved to have us all gathered around his bed to chat with him, he could no longer stand having us there," stated Dom Symphorien. On August 14, he received Extreme Unction and Viaticum from the abbot of Catacombs. On the evening of August 17, Cardinal Macchi brought him the blessing of Pope Pius X. Cardinal Rampolla had also visited a few days earlier. He died on August 18, a little after 3 o'clock in the afternoon, at the age of 65, surrounded by members of the Generalate, the abbot of Catacombs, and the prior of Tre Fontane. His mother died a few months later, on January 14, 1905, at the age of 92.

The solemn Requiem Mass was celebrated on the feast of Saint Bernard on Saturday, August 20, 1904, in the church of the Precious Blood Sisters, across the street from the Generalate, and the body was taken that afternoon to the cemetery of Tre Fontane. The tombstone bears the epitaph: *Vir fide et amore Ecclesiae strenuus*, 'a man vigorous in faith and in love for the Church'.

SUMMARY TABLE

Year	Date	Dom Wyart and the Cistercian Order	Other Events
1839	October 11	Born in the north of France	
1846	June 1		Death of Gregory XVI
	June 16		Election of Pius IX
1860	August	Enrolled with the Pontifical Zouaves	
	Sept. 18	Wounded at the Battle of Castelfidardo	
1864			Syllabus (of Errors)
1867		Battle of Bagnorea and Mentana	Garibaldi on way to Rome
1869	December 8		Opening of Vatican I
1870	July and	Defense and surrender of Rome	Franco-Prussian War.
1871	September	Combat in France against the Prussians	Piedmont occupies Rome
1872	February	Applies at Mont-des-Cats (= MdC)	
1874	February 12	Simple Profession (perpetual)	
1875	May	At Rome for study and as secretary of the Procurator. Consults Pius IX about his vocation	
1876	Dec. 23	Sub-deaconate	
1877	Feb.-Mar.	Deacon, Feb. 24, then priest on March 31	
1878		Attempted reunification of the three Trappist Congregations	Death of Pius IX, Feb. 7 Election of Leo XIII, Feb. 20
1879	July-Aug.	Failure of reunification attempt	Encycl. *Aeterni Patris*
1880	Nov.–Dec. 24	End of studies in Rome. Solemn Vows Eviction of some communities of the Order	Laws against the Congregations in France
1881	March	Fr. Wyart founds Tilburg. Prior at MdC.	
1883	January	Death of the abbot of Mont-des-Cats. Abbatial Election of Dom Wyart	
1884	January	Foundation of Catacombs at Rome	
1885		Dom Wyart often at Catacombs	
1886		Sick (malaria) Sept.-Oct.	
1887	October	Elected abbot of Sept-Fons, remains administrator of Catacombs (to 1888) and of MdC (to 1889)	
1891			Encycl. *Rerum Novarum*
1892	October	Chapter of Union of the three Trappist Congregations. Elected Abbot General (abbot of Sept-Fons until 1899)	
1894	25 August	Approval of the new Constitutions	
1895		Wyart organizes resistance against fiscal laws.	1895 Fiscal laws against
1897		Mission to the bishops of France on Pope's behalf	religious in France.
1898	October	Reestablishment of monastic life at Cîteaux	
1899	9 February	Elected abbot of Cîteaux.	
	22 August	Dom Chautard installed as abbot of Sept-Fons	
1901		In October, Dom Wyart is sick	Law requiring authorization for the Congregations
1902	30 July	Leo XIII's Letter *Non mediocri*	The Emile Combes gov't.
1903		Dom Chautard meets with Clemenceau	Death of Leo XIII, July 20
	July	Dom Wyart, cataract operation at Laval	Election of Pius X, Aug. 4
1904	18 August	Death at Rome, shortly after 3 p.m.	

2.3.2. Bishop Augustin Marre (1853–1927), Abbot General 1904–1927

Augustin Marre was born on November 16, 1853 at Glassac, in the Aveyron region of southern France. The eldest of a Christian rural family, he received a good education at Rodez with the Congregation of St. Viator, and felt called to religious life. He entered at Sainte-Marie-du-Désert, near Toulouse, in November 1871, wanting to be a lay brother like his uncle, Br. Charles Marre (who entered in 1866). But his father needed him on the farm, and he returned home to help. Attraction to monastic life, however, asserted itself with greater urgency: he abruptly left his family again shortly after Christmas in 1872. He spent one year as an oblate and became a novice on March 19, 1874. Soon after, his youngest brother, whose name was Charles, like his uncle, also entered on August 20, 1875.[31]

AT IGNY

Three years after his entrance, while still a novice, he was chosen to go with the small group of founders whom the abbot, Dom Etienne Salasc, sent to Igny to repopulate that ancient Cistercian abbey, where Bl. Guerric was its second abbot in the twelfth century. The foundation was made even before the General Chapter could approve it. The Chapter did give its approval in September 1876, but did not fail to mention this anomaly. The founding group was 23 in all, 4 of whom were novices, including the two Marre brothers, 10 were lay brothers (including their uncle Marre), and 3 oblates. In December 1875 they moved into the eighteenth-century buildings, which were in relatively good shape, and which had been purchased thanks to a few generous donors, one of whom was Bishop Langénieux, Archbishop of Reims. This latter, who had requested the foundation, wanted to render the event more solemn by holding a celebration at the cathedral on February 2. The foundation cross was blessed in the presence of a large crowd during the Pontifical Mass.

The monks had brought little with them, and the monastery was neither furnished nor in good repair. In the early days they had to sleep on straw and suffer the ill effects of the wind that came through the poorly sealed windows. Poverty characterized the first years of their life at Igny.

On September 21, 1876, the church was dedicated. Built in 1788, it replaced the old fourteenth-century structure, which had been little more than a small circular chapel. The remains of Bl. Guerric, found beneath a stone slab in the church,

31 The two brothers later saw their father knock on the door at Igny in 1901. He died there on February 6, 1910, after making simple profession in articulo mortis. The monastic vocation was thus a family affair for the Marres!

were placed in the altar. Four bishops accompanied the archbishop, along with 13 abbots or titular priors, who came over from La Grande Trappe, where they were holding the General Chapter. During the celebration, while the bishops were consecrating the various altars, one of them, Bishop Soubiranne, auxiliary bishop of Algiers, conferred the sub-deaconate on Br. Augustin.

His time in the novitiate ended with simple profession on March 25, 1876. Three years later he made solemn profession on May 22, 1879, feast of the Ascension. In the meantime he had received priestly ordination on November 18, 1877, at age twenty-four, which was helpful, because one of the three priest-founders, Fr. Louis de Gonzague, had died on May 4, 1876. The community was so short on priests that, in November 1879, the prior, Fr. Nivard Fournier, requested an indult that would allow Augustin's brother, Br. Deacon Charles Marre, also to be ordained priest, even though he was 18 months short of the canonical age.

The prior soon put Fr. Augustin's skills to good use, naming him cellarar (October 1876) and sub-prior (September 1878) in spite of his young age. Their situation was not easy. Under pressure from the archbishop, they had to agree to take care of a rural orphanage with 20 boys, beginning in 1877; it increased to 60 children, but had to be closed in 1891 for lack of sufficient funds. In 1880, when there was fear of eviction from France, a part of their cattle was sold and the fields were left fallow. For several months, neighbors took turns keeping watch to stave off any aggression. The novices, in street cloths, lived away from the monastery for a time in a nearby house provided by the archbishop. But the prior grew fatigued and discouraged. The Father Immediate, who came in late 1880 to raise spirits and reestablish regular discipline, agreed to relieve him of his duties. He returned in February 1881, and, having consulted with the professed monks, appointed Fr. Augustin to replace him. He thus found himself at the head of the community at the age of 27.[32]

ABBOT OF IGNY

Temporal matters continued to worry him. Each year brought with it a rather large deficit that could only be met with help from benefactors. To relieve the situation, a chocolate factory was established in 1883. Little by little it prospered, and, within a few years, was providing the community with the necessary income. But the community met with hardship when, on December 5, 1881, Fr. Etienne, at the age of 53, was accidentally killed, pulled into the gears of the mill turbine.

32 In January, at the local municipal elections, Fr. Augustin was elected municipal counselor. He was reelected continuously up until his resignation on May 26, 1903. The reason for his resignation was to avoid any trouble for Igny: the government wanting to abolish the community, Dom Marre wanted to show that he held no undesirable political influence.

At the 1885 General Chapter, Igny's Father Immediate was able to report that "the spirit is good and the Rule is observed by and large. The Rev. Fr. Prior, who is still faced with numerous difficulties, fulfils his duties with a dedication worthy of all praise. The financial situation seems to be improving." The community by then had 36 members. The following June, Bishop Langénieux was made Cardinal. Always very interested in the monastery, he asked that it become an abbey. Since the debt was still large enough to be an obstacle, he offered to pick up a large part of it, along with two other persons in the diocese. The reasons he offered were found acceptable by the General Chapter, which met at Melleray in July: they unanimously granted his wish. Igny had held the rank of abbey until 1793; why then did it not recover its rank when it was restored in 1876? To make sure, the Holy See was consulted, and, with its approval, the Igny was raised as an abbey on August 28. The abbatial election took place on September 6, 1886. There was no doubt about its outcome: Fr. Augustin was elected unanimously, minus his own vote. Confirmed by Dom Gregorio Bartolini, President General of the Cistercians, he was blessed at Reims in the chapel of the Christian Brothers on October 28.

In 1896, Cardinal Langénieux organized large celebrations at Reims, in the form of a national jubilee, to mark the fourteenth centenary of the baptism of Clovis, the highpoint being October 1–12. The abbots were invited along with the bishops, and the General Chapter put together two delegations. Dom Augustin, his Father Immediate, and six abbots took part in the celebrations on October 1–4; next, six other abbots attended October 6–11. More than 50 cardinals, archbishops, and bishops from France and elsewhere came to Reims for the occasion. This gathering of crowds alarmed the government, especially because the Cardinal was quite involved in public affairs in France. The year before, when the 1895 subscription tax was voted in, he had incited members of religious Orders to resist.

The last years of the nineteenth century were good years for Igny. The economic situation improved, and a company was established in 1895. The chocolate factory was rebuilt further away from the monastery and set up with modern equipment; it grew to the point of employing 75 workers.[33] The factory was blessed by Cardinal Langénieux on June 29, 1899. There was an influx of vocations. The future looked bright, in spite of the clouds gathering on the political front in France in 1903.

AUXILIARY BISHOP OF REIMS

The archbishop's esteem for the abbot of Igny grew. He invited him to accompany him on his legation to the international Eucharistic congress at Jerusalem in 1893.

33 The monk in charge of the chocolate factory was Dom Augustin's brother, Fr. Charles Marre, who was also subprior and master of novices.

Wanting an even closer partnership, he asked the Pope to appoint him as auxiliary bishop. But in order to avoid having to deal with the government, which appointed bishops and would never allow a member of a Congregation receive the miter, he found a subterfuge: during a trip to Rome, the Pope would appoint Dom Marre as bishop *in partibus*, on a personal and honorific basis. He would receive episcopal consecration in Rome, and, back in France, the archbishop of Reims would naturally put his abilities to use without offending anyone. That is what happened. Sent to Rome in August 1900, Dom Augustin received his appointment, which for him was a shock. He was consecrated bishop by Cardinal Satolli on August 19, in the church across the street from the Order's Generalate, which the Precious Blood Sisters made available to the Trappists when needed (and it was there that Dom Wyart's funeral was held four years later).

This new responsibility, which was limited to a few Confirmation circuits, allowed the abbot of Igny to give Cardinal Langénieux the last rites in early summer 1903. But the prelate rallied enough to be able to take part in the conclave that elected the new Pope, Pius X, on August 4, 1903. Langénieux lived on until December 31, 1904.

By then, Dom Augustin had been Abbot General of the Order for three months. As a bishop and as abbot of Igny, he regularly attended the General Chapter, and, except in church, wanted only to take the place that belonged to him according to his abbey's seniority. However, during the 1903 General Chapter, it was he and not Dom Wyart, who gave the abbatial blessing to Dom Fortunat Marchand, abbot elect of Fontgombault. It is worth noting that, on a visit to Sainte-Marie-du-Désert in 1902, Bishop Marre was asked to ordain as priest a young monk who was none other than the future Bl. Joseph Cassant. He also ordained two of his monks at Igny on September 24, 1904, just before going to Cîteaux to elect a successor to Dom Wyart.

ABBOT GENERAL

Dom Sébastien had died on August 18, 1904. The General Chapter that elected his successor opened on October 8, and on that same afternoon, on the first round, Dom Augustin received three-fourths of the votes. He was stunned, as he was when appointed bishop. He dreaded having to give an account to God for responsibilities that he felt were beyond him. Nonetheless, obedience to God's will resolved his crisis of conscience, as he wrote in a circular letter to all the communities on November 21, 1904. In this letter, he praises his predecessor and gives a report on his audience with Pius X.

The Igny community was both delighted and upset: what would become of

it without its abbot, who would be difficult to replace? The community directly requested of Pius X and obtained from him that the new Abbot General would remain abbot of Igny at the same time. Was this beneficial in the long run? Dom Augustin was often absent from his community, visiting communities of the Order and making several stays in Rome, even though Igny seems to have been his home base more than was Cîteaux or the Generalate.[34] A great deal was delegated to the prior, Fr. Bernard Oudart, and he was even allowed to take part in the General Chapter, beginning in 1913, with voting rights (as did the auxiliary abbot of Cîteaux and the prior-superior of Tre Fontane). Igny nonetheless suffered from the situation and was unable to develop well. Was it a coincidence that recruitment lagged after 1900? After that date, only three postulants persevered (one priest and two lay brothers). It is true that the political situation in France was hardly encouraging for vocations. At the beginning of the war (1914–1918), which was a deathblow to the community, Igny was down to 10 choir monks and 9 lay brothers.

The new Abbot General set about visiting the monasteries. Generally speaking, until he became ill in 1911, he spent the winter months in Rome and tried to go back there twice during the year, especially in late spring, in order to prepare the agenda for the General Chapter. On the way, he stopped at Cîteaux. Regular Visitations in those houses he was directly responsible for took up much of his travel time.[35] In between times he was at Igny. Early in his time as General, he visited the monasteries in Germany and Austria, returning on August 7, 1906. In May 1909, he crossed the ocean—something his predecessor was unable to do—to make regular visitations in the monasteries of the United States and Canada. He was received with much joy and consideration. It was scorching hot at New Melleray. He arrived at Prairies in Manitoba on May 28. From there he went to Lac, near Montreal, and continued on toward Lac-Saint-Jean, arriving at Mistassini in mid-June, accompanied by the abbot ofLac and by Dom Pacôme Gaboury, the local prior, who had traveled to meet him. He spoke in admiration of Canadian trains, in which one could rest well, without feeling the least jolt. He was right: the train was stuck for four hours because of a rock that had fallen on the tracks and that needed to be dynamited in order to be removed. The stop had benefited the prelate's naps. The trip also included visits to Saint-Romuald and the monasteries of the eastern territories. In mid-July he was back in France, and had to attend to the question of Tiburg (see below).

34 Fortunately, his correspondence with the Procurator, who stayed in Rome, has been preserved, beginning in 1908, and makes it possible to follow the Abbot General in his travels and to have some information about the state of his health. This correspondence is implicitly referred to in the paragraphs that follow.

35 La Grande Trappe, Melleray, Westmalle, Oelenberg, Port-du-Salut, Laval…

Concerned about having to give God an account of his time as superior, he thought it his duty not only to point out to superiors the shortcomings he found in their communities but also effectively to correct excesses and deviations, going as far as imposing sanctions. He set the tone at the 1905 General Chapter:

> You know me well enough to realize that I have no intention of ushering in an era of severity. But is my duty to remind you that, in order to correct excesses, the General Chapter must use effective means and, when necessary, resort to penal sanctions… I have been at the head of the Order for only eleven months now, and already I find it necessary to raise the alarm. I beg your pardon, but I would be failing in my duty if I did not do so. The visits I have made and the numerous letters I have received from all of our houses have allowed me to see that the principle of authority is tending to weaken among us. There are superiors who no longer dare to correct, much less command. They are no longer listened to, and find themselves reduced to being helpless observers of the increasing decadence of their communities.

The General Chapter seemed to him to be the effective means for countering the ills that threatened to eat away at certain communities, as long as the Fathers Immediate give accurate accounts of their regular visitations and as long as the Chapter dares to take the necessary measures, before the ills are beyond remedy. The opening speeches at his first General Chapters elaborate at length on these convictions.

Interior holiness is, of course, the personal ideal of each monk or nun, and that must be our aim, but the community will only be able to provide the environment needed to attain this goal if it is prompt in observing the Rules. It is this exactitude that guarantees the spiritual wellbeing of the communities (1908). Observance is the supreme good that we must protect with utmost care: "A religious Order is only useful to the Church to the degree that it is faithful to its observances" (1906). There are two major means for guaranteeing this fidelity to the observances: the chapter of faults and the regular visitation. Concerning the chapter of faults, "It is when there are no accusations, proclamations, or penances that irregularity makes its way into a house" (1906). "A community in which proclamations have fallen into disuse is like a house whose stones are coming apart" (1905). The regular visitation is "the sinews of observance," if it is done seriously; otherwise all it will do is undermine the walls a little further (1905).

But there is a third means of control, namely, the General Chapter, which is "above all an examination of our houses in view of approving and encouraging them, and of rectifying whatever might be lacking" (1908). To that end, he re-

minded the same Chapter, the reports of regular visitations must always be complete and sincere, "so that the General Chapter can make decisions or impose necessary sanctions with full knowledge and in complete freedom."

To Bishop Marre, these sanctions that he constantly mentions, referring to the Rule, seem necessary to him in order for the various means of control to be effective (1905). "In order to fulfill the purpose for which the General Chapter and regular visitations were instituted, they must include sanctions needed for the maintenance of discipline in the Order" (1909). This was also to be his last will and testament. He returned to the subject in the farewell speech he prepared for the 1920 Chapter, during which he planned to resign (but which was not immediately accepted). Countering those who wanted the General Chapter to involve more reflection on what would foster the interior life (and which would alter the appearance of the Chapter),[36] he upheld the traditional approach. The General Chapter, he said, was made up of men of God. If they had thought something more than an official check on regular observance was needed for the sake of fostering the interior life, or if they had seen a need to theorize about the virtues and means of practicing them, they would have realized this and arranged things accordingly. But no, the Chapter does not theorize; it is essentially a serious review of the regular visitations. He concluded:

> Allow me to say that, in my opinion, whatever we do, we will have done nothing as long as we do not return to a practice that we have perhaps allowed to fall into disuse. I am speaking of the sanctions of the General Chapter, sanctions against anyone who has incurred them, superiors, inferiors, and even the Visitors themselves, if they fell short of their duty.[37]

To this end, the 1908 General Chapter decided to set up a "Commission of Discipline," whose task it was, at the beginning of each Chapter, to study the most sensitive questions raised in the reports of regular visitations, to make inquiries, and to "submit to the Chapter the measures to be taken and the penances to be imposed." At the opening of the 1909 General Chapter, Bishop Marre stressed the importance and the appropriateness of this commission, also saying how important it was to choose well its five members.

Dom Augustin was involved in temporal affairs already at a young age, and

36 It is worth recalling that in 1913, on the anniversary of Bernard's entrance at Cîteaux, the General Chapter began with three days of retreat with conferences on Cistercian spirituality. Some abbots appreciated this experience and wanted to repeat it. One of them made a request in January 1919, acting as spokesman for a few others. Dom Bernard Chevalier, abbot of La Trappe, had ended his talk in 1913 by expressing his wish that a similar retreat be held every five years. For Bishop Marrre, it was not essential to the General Chapter.

37 This passage was later cited by Dom Smets in his opening speech at the first Chapter he presided over, in 1930.

scarcely had the time to extend his intellectual formation. He became more a man of government and order than a man of doctrine, as can be seen in his opening speeches at General Chapters and in his circular letters. In these writings he does not deal with spiritual subjects; rather, he gives juridical pointers on duties to be fulfilled. When he went to Mistassini in June 1909, the monks, it seems, were disappointed by his lack of eloquence. He did not have the charisma of his predecessor, who could fire his audience with enthusiasm, but he was perhaps more rigorous in his thinking.

TEMPORAL ADMINISTRATION OF THE COMMUNITIES

A delicate area was that of temporal matters. Precise rules were laid down, which, if well observed, could prevent disaster. The Church also got involved in the question. Among the points to which Pius X called close attention in his letter of May 31, 1905, and about which Dom Augustin reminded the Chapter of that year, was respect for the norms governing the administration of property and funds. Dom Augustin mentioned a few of these norms at the beginning of the 1908 Chapter, which drew up a commentary on the Constitutions regarding this point. In fact, in 1909, a fifteen-article Decree on Temporal Administration was promulgated. It was further refined in 1913 before being presented to the Holy See for approval. Dom Chautard clearly played an important role in drafting it. A concrete example of bookkeeping was sent to the monasteries in February 1910. The 1920 General Chapter approved a new statute.

These recommendations were all too necessary, as is seen in certain cases dealt with in the General Chapters of those same years. Often mentioned is the dangerous situation of communities that have accumulated more debt than they can pay and so are asking for help. Other cases involve superiors who were sanctioned for having made expenses without the necessary authorization. In 1909, the abbot of Tilburg caused a scandal, and the Holy See had to depose him after making an apostolic visitation.

This same abbot had already caused problems during Dom Wyart's time in office, both because of his personality and because of his administration. There was talk of making him resign in 1899. An apostolic visitation was carried out in 1908. The result was that the Holy See deposed Dom Willibrord on April 15, 1909, and appointed the Father Immediate as provisional administrator.[38] This latter

38 In March 1909, Dom Willibrord had gathered at Tilburg a few Belgian and Dutch superiors over whom he had some influence, including the elderly abbot of Westmalle, who was somewhat tricked into it. They decided to ask the Holy See to form a sort of province with the possibility of meeting as a Chapter under the presidency of the abbot of Westmalle, who would be the appointed visitor of their houses. The idea was to get out from

had to inform the abbot of his deposition and get him to relinquish ownership of the property of Tilburg, Zundert, and Charneux, over which he was the sole titleholder. But Dom Willibrord had gotten deep into debt (for which Dom Wyart had the Order stand security, at least for the interest), and the banks that held his credit did not want him to relinquish his hold on the monasteries' goods. He therefore refused to comply, and the Holy See ordered the monks of these houses to leave the property and go to other monasteries of the region. Dom Willibrord was thus isolated. Bishop Marre was in America at the time, and, while awaiting his return, Dom Norbert, abbot of Scourmont, tried to mediate, but without result. Finally, the 1909 General Chapter put Dom Chautard—the man for difficult situations—in charge of negotiating with the creditors. These bankers, all good Catholics, finally accepted to place the goods under litigation into the account of a newly-created non-trading company on condition that Tilburg resume its for-profit activities. The generosity of the capitulants made it possible for Dom Chautard to have sufficient funds to set up this company. There was also need to deal with various crooks and unscrupulous persons who had gotten involved. With the exception of a few of the abbot's former officers, the monks were allowed to return, but, at the General Chapter's request, the Holy See imposed a new abbot on them in March 1913, and he had trouble being accepted by a few difficult religious.[39] Dom Chautard had to maintain delegated paternity of this community until 1922. In a circular letter of December 1, 1909, Bishop Marre thanked him publicly for his efforts and his know-how. There would be further expressions of sincere gratitude at the 1910 Chapter. Nevertheless, this community was a source of worry for Bishop Marre all through his time as General.

Another abbot's behavior, more secret this time, but equally reprehensible, also needed to be sanctioned the following year, and again, Dom Chautard's know-how would be put to use. Seeing his abbey's resources dwindle after having sold its businesses for fear of eviction, the abbot of La Grande Trappe, Dom Etienne Salasc,[40] wanted to make more profit off his remaining capital. Unfortunately, he fell into the hands of a clever crook, whom he supported to the very end, blinded, it seems, by his affection for the man's father and, as it were, hypnotized by him. He went so far as giving him blank checks and investing the dowries of the nuns of Cour-Pétral, for whom he was Father Immediate. He did all these things in spite

under the so-called "French" domination. Obviously, the Holy See followed the negative opinion of the Order's authorities.

39 Dom Willibrord died at Frattocchie in 1935 under the name Fr. Francesco.

40 Dom Salasc was the abbot of Désert who had received Dom Augustin as a novice and at profession, and who founded Igny. On August 6, 1881, he was elected abbot of La Grande Trappe, thus becoming ex officioVicar General of his Congregation. But on July 4, 1884, the Holy See separated these two functions. Dom Eugene Vachette, abbot of Melleray, was then elected as Vicar General.

of ecclesiastical law and the law of the Order, without consulting anyone or taking any votes, even without any kind of serious bookkeeping. The most disconcerting thing is that he denied the facts when the problems were noticed and when he was warned. Faced with these warnings, he responded that he had a clean conscience. In August 1910, Bishop Marre, who had been alerted, reminded him of the norms and warned him about the possible sanctions. He answered that all was well. The Discipline Commission of the 1910 Chapter forced him to commit himself to respecting the statute on temporal administration adopted the year before, but he did not honor his signature, and continued as before. The regular visitation of Bishop Marre in October 1910 and the extraordinary visitation made by the two delegates he sent in April 1911,[41] being ill, made no difference, and what had to happen happened: La Trappe became insolvent and was faced with dubious creditors, who began seizing the property. The 1911 Chapter no longer hesitated: Dom Etienne was forced to resign, and he was forbidden to return to La Trappe. His attitude was all the more shocking, because his seniority and the tasks entrusted to him over the years gave him a moral authority that got him elected every time as a member of the Discipline Commission. Dom Chautard was again called on to help the two visitors of April 1911, whom the Chapter appointed as administrators.[42]

SPIRITUALITY AND LITURGY

The Cistercian spirituality of the nineteenth century was strongly penitential in character, as can be seen in the Spiritual Directory published in 1869. The wish to return to the values elaborated in the twelfth century, as expressed by the 1892 Chapter of union, led to a reconsideration of this orientation. In 1900, during Dom Wyart's time as Abbot General, it was decided to revise the Spiritual Directory, and the task was assigned to Dom Vital Lehodey, abbot of Bricquebec. In 1908 he presented a draft to a commission that examined it before it was sent to the printer in 1909 (see 2.4.1).

At this same Chapter in 1900 there was also expressed a desire for a book of meditations adapted for our Order. Since two authors had already begun to work along those lines, they were encouraged to continue. The result was the commentary on the Rule by Dom Symphorien Bernigaud, definitor and secretary to Dom

41 These two visitors were the abbot of Bricquebec, Dom Vital Lehodey, and the abbot of Timadeuc, Dom Bernard Chevalier.

42 An incorporation made up of friends and benefactors—including several abbots—was created to buy the property, which thus satisfied the creditors. The property was then rented to the monks. The rent they paid covered the interest on the capital invested by the stockholders. Over the years the monks bought the stock, and in 1978, by obtaining legal recognition, they recovered the real estate as a community. Dom Etienne Salasc retired to Mount-Melleray in Ireland, where he died on August 20, 1921.

Wyart, which was approved in 1908. On his own initiative, but with the General Chapter's authorization, Dom Vital Lehodey published works that became famous: *The Ways of Mental Prayer* (1906) and *Holy Abandonment* (1919) (see 2.4.1). Dom Etienne Salasc was also able to publish his meditations in 1907.

A commission was appointed in 1900 to revise the *Ceremonial*, for the sake of uniformity of observance. The work, begun by monks of Désert, was further elaborated, corrected, and re-corrected. But when a trial version was issued in 1908, some called its legitimacy into question and reported it to the Holy See. Bishop Marre obtained a response from the Congregation of Rites on March 8, 1913, affirming that the authentically Cistercian ceremonial was the Rituale of 1689, which book was precisely the basis for the 1908 Ceremonial. This latter was to be the point of reference for the rubrics of the Missal whenever there was a conflict between the two books. The new rubrics of the Missal were approved in 1924. Dom Malet, the abbot of Désert, published a well-documented report to justify the choices of the commission that had prepared the 1908 Ceremonial. He expanded the report, and turned it in a small book of 50 pages, entitled "Cistercian Liturgy: Its Origins, Constitution, Transformation, and Restoration," published in 1921 by the Order's printing house at Westmalle.

In order worthily to celebrate the eighth centenary of Saint Bernard's entrance at Cîteaux, it was proposed to gather the abbots at Cîteaux a few days before the 1913 General Chapter for discussions on Cistercian Spirituality. A dozen abbots agreed to give conferences at this three-day retreat for superiors, which was preached by Fr. Lacomme, OP. The minutes of the event, published at Westmalle in 1914, give an outline of the Dominican's lectures and the text of nearly all the superiors' conferences. Dom Vital's conference "On the Role and Duties of the First Superior" was published separately. Dom André Malet presented a summary of what he later elaborated in his 1933 book *The Supernatural Life: Its Elements and its Exercise*. In 1922, Dom Anselme Le Bail presented to the Chapter the first part of his book *The Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance*.

MARIANNHILL

During Bishop Marre's time as Abbot General, Mariannhill freed itself from the Order and became a very active missionary Congregation. The Apostolic Vicar of Cape Town, Bishop Ricards, came to the Chapter of the Sept-Fons Congregation in 1879, asking for a foundation. The prior of Mariastern, Dom Franz Pfanner,[43] accepted to answer the request if the bishop would take on a part of his commu-

43 Born in Austria, near Bregenz, in 1825, he was first a diocesan priest, then a monk of Mariawald (1863–1867) and founder of Mariastern in 1869. For a time he held the title of prior at both Mariastern and Mariannhill.

nity's debts… The deal was made,[44] and on July 28, 1880, thirty monks landed at Port-Elisabeth, headed by the prior himself. The site of the first settlement at Dunbrody turned out to be unsuitable, and since the bishop was no longer able to help the community financially, the monastery was moved to Natal, near Pinetown, in December 1882, becoming Mariannhill (i.e., the hill of Mary and Ann). The community developed well, but how, in the midst of the pagan Zulu population, could they be uninterested in the evangelization of the local people? The first step was to open a boarding school. Efforts were not limited to the area around the growing monastery; its influence spread further. Dom Pfanner bought up available farms, some of them quite distant, and turned them into mission posts. They even extended into Rhodesia. In theory, the way of life in these mission posts or "stations" was to be the same as at the abbey, but those who worked in them found it difficult to reconcile regular observance and mission work. Dom Franz was more zealous for souls than for the Rule or the Usages. In 1885, he founded an institute of religious sisters, the "Precious Blood Missionaries," to help out, especially for the education of girls. He wrote a rule for them. The first five sisters came from Germany in 1885. In 1887 they received a religious habit. The following year they already numbered 117. In 1885, Mariannhill was recognized as an abbey, and Dom Franz received the abbatial blessing on December 27.

The Chapter of the de Rancé Congregation, to which Mariannhill belonged, meeting at Catacombs on April 6, 1891, insinuated that not all was well with the observance of certain missionaries in relation to the Order's norms. A regular visitation by the Father Immediate, the abbot of Oelenberg, was planned for the month of November, but it did not resolve the tensions. Because he did not conform with the visitor's recommendations, which he felt went against his prerogatives (and in which he was perhaps not mistaken), the abbot was suspended for a year,[45] and ended up resigning in 1893, in order to work as a simple monk in one of the stations he founded, called Emmaus.[46]

The work continued nevertheless. The General Chapter of 1898 expressed pleasure in "the daily growth of this monastery and mission, one of the most beautiful in Africa." Alas, Dom Amandus, Dom Pfanner's successor, died in 1900. The abbot of Oelenberg spent three months at Mariannhill, visiting the abbey and its 24 stations. At the time, there were 100 choir monks and 200 lay brothers. He proceeded

44 But the deal was based on a misunderstanding, stemming from the fact that the bishop spoke English, which was then translated into French, and then into German. The bishop thought it was a loan, not a gift. He held to his interpretation, to the great displeasure of Dom Pfanner.

45 Dom Pfanner, for health reasons, was unable to take part in the Chapter of union in 1892. Mariannhill was represented by Fr. Amandus Schoelzig, the novice master. It was he who received the powers of apostolic administrator after the abbot's resignation; he was then elected abbot in 1894.

46 Because he was unable to speak the Zulu language, he was not personally a missionary.

to the election of Dom Amand's successor, Dom Gerard Wolpert. The community did in fact live in unusual circumstances, and it requested several important permissions that made the General Chapter hesitate but that were granted nonetheless. The first year of the novitiate was spent in Germany. This practice might give the impression that vocations were not necessarily African, but that was not at all the case. The Precious Blood Sisters also had a house of formation in Germany beginning in 1901.[47]

The situation got worse after 1904. Dom Gerard, wanting to dedicate himself more fully to missionary life in the stations, resigned, and the General Chapter decided to appoint an apostolic administrator in the person of the abbot of Gethsemani, Dom Edmond Obrecht. He accepted on condition that he have full powers and that he be accompanied by Fr. Fabien Dutter, who was the first cellarer at Cîteaux. This mission lasted three years, and each year the administrator proposed certain measures to the General Chapter. In 1905, the Chapter asked that the construction of the monastery at Mariannhill be completed and that each priest and each station cellarer spend at least two weeks a year there. It also asked that there be at least two priests per station, that the sisters have more autonomy and less contact with the fathers, and that the permissions to be granted should be kept to a minimum. In 1906, the wish was expressed that "the monastery be animated by a more purely Cistercian spirit."

But, in fact, the administrator came up against resistance from certain elements in the community, who criticized him severely. Thus, in 1907, he concluded that their missionary vocation outweighed their monastic life, and that it would be better to let them take charge of their orientation on their own. In contrast with the Common Observance, the Strict Observance endeavored to be dedicated essentially to contemplative life, and found it difficult to take on regular and extended apostolic ministry. The religious of Mariannhill were asked to confer with one another to decide just what it was they wanted. Meeting under the presidency of the bishop of Transvaal, with a unanimous vote, minus two abstentions, they asked to be raised to a particular congregation with their own superior general. Their request was considered at the 1908 General Chapter. The Holy See also considered it, and, on February 2, 1909, came out with a decree that separated Mariannhill from the Order, turning the abbey into a collegiate church with a provost at its head. The following May 24, Dom Franz died in the odor of sanctity, most likely personally saddened by the now unavoidable separation. The Congregation

47 Dom Pfanner edited a journal called Myosotis, whose purpose was to make his work known in Germany and Austria, and which attracted many donations and recruits from these countries. He was reproached for not submitting this publication to the Order's censorship. After the 1891 General Chapter, he returned from Europe with 39 postulants in tow.

took final shape with the approval of its Constitutions in 1936. By then it had become international.

There was a similar situation in the Belgian Congo. It was dealt with at the 1904 General Chapter at the same time as Mariannhill, with the same concerns. The monks of Westmalle had answered a request from the King of the Belgians, Leopold II, in 1894. But the growth of this undertaking was less extensive, and the final outcome was not reached until 1926, after Dom Anselme Le Bail conducted a several-months-long visitation, the first since its foundation. There will be more on this topic later. Suffice it to note that, already in 1905, following complaints from the Holy See about the behavior of the religious, the General Chapter took a series of measures concerning this foundation.

SICKNESS AND THE WAR

The year 1911 was a turning point in Dom Marre's life. While at Igny in April before Easter, he got so sick he was confined to bed. Two months later he thought he was better, but he canceled the trip he had planned to Rome. Another bout had him down for a few days, but he was back on his feet by the end of May. The doctor ordered complete rest, which Dom Augustin announced to the abbots in a circular letter on June 11, asking that important matters be addressed to the Vicar, and general business to the Procurator. He was, however, well enough to preside at the General Chapter in September. In fact, though, he never got better. His heart acted up from time to time, suddenly. He would be down for two or three days with high fever, and he would then need two or three weeks of complete rest to get over it. As the years went on, the spells became more frequent, preventing him from taking long trips. Several times, beginning with All Saints, 1916, he had to put off or cancel going to Rome when he wanted to. It became a serious handicap. "Fortunately for us," wrote Dom Symphorien, a definitor, "his intellectual activity never lessened: even at his worst moments of exhaustion, he always kept the keenness of mind and precision that were so characteristic of him."[48]

He was able to spend the winter of 1911–1912 in Rome, but he made no long trips in 1912, staying at Igny and Laval. Several abbots came to consult with him. He took up his usual regular visitations in 1913. That May he made his rounds in Holland and Belgium. Arriving at Westmalle on May 5, he left on the eighth, in order to be in Brussels on the ninth: "after a smooth visitation," wrote his secretary, "our Very Rev. was in a hurry to be on his way, and so was Dom Hermann [the local abbot]." Bishop Marre spent Pentecost at Igny. He then went down to Blagnac,

48 Letter to the abbess of Laval, October 18, 1911.

and gradually made his way to Oelenberg, where he opened the regular visitation on the evening of June 12: "If the Very Rev. works like usual," noted Fr. Fabien, his secretary, "it won't take long." In fact, on June 17 he was at La Fille-Dieu, but before the General Chapter in September, he still had time to go to Cîteaux, Igny, La Trappe, Melleray, Laval, and Port-du-Salut. After the General Chapter and a stop at Igny, he spent the winter in Rome, and returned to Igny on May 10, 1914. At that time, everyone was terrified at the thought of the eviction measures the newly-elected government planned to carry out against houses of our Order around July 14. The abbess of Maubec was warned that her monastery was on a list of banishment measures. Bricquebec and La Grande Trappe were also on the list… Dom Chautard left for Brazil. Bishop Marre and his secretary were sorry to see him go: "We are so used to being able to count on him." It was a strategic absence advised by Clemenceau, a way to gain time. It was feared that he would not be back in time for the General Chapter.

But the Chapter did not take place: war broke out on August 2. The Procurator, Dom Norbert Sauvage was mobilized. Bishop Marre, who was then at Igny, was able to get to Rome in October and stay there until April 1915, when, in order to have his health looked after, he went to Switzerland, staying at La Fille-Dieu. His time from April 1915 to March 1916 was divided mostly between La Fille-Dieu, Igny, and Cîteaux. His health was badly compromised. In spite of his spirit of submission to the Pope, he was unable to respond to his convocation in June 1915.[49] He was able, however, to make the desired trip to Rome in April–May 1916, in spite of the difficult travel conditions, with overcrowded trains in wartime. Beginning on All Saints, 1916, the heart attacks were increasingly frequent, and he was forced to stay at Igny. On March 15, 1917, he wrote that he had had four attacks in four months: "my health is terrible; it goes badly with my heart." Dom Fabien returned to Rome alone that winter, and met up with Bishop Marre at Laval in April 1917: he had gone there to get away from the continuous canon fire that could be heard at Igny and that got on his nerves, and also because mail was becoming unreliable there. His brother, Fr. Charles, went to stay with him at the Chaplain's house at Laval.[50] It was there that they spent the rest of the war. Between heart attacks, the forced inactivity allowed the Abbot General and his secretary, who was also a definitor, to begin studying how to apply to our Order the new Code of Canon Law, published May 17, 1917. The Constitutions adjusted to the Code were approved by the 1921 General Chapter and presented to the Holy See.

49 The Pope wanted him to take on the administration of Casamari, which was without an abbot. It was a matter that had dragged on since 1911 and that would continue to pester him.

50 Fr. Charles suffered from Parkinson's disease. In January 1919, Bishop Marre obtained for him an indult to celebrate Mass seated. He died at Cîteaux on April 14, 1921, at the age of 63.

At the end of August 1918, he heard about the disaster at Igny. The six remaining monks there had to flee on May 28, faced with the devastating German advance. They had to go to their motherhouse, Sainte-Marie-du-Désert, taking along only the bare essentials. But three weeks later, forced to retreat, the Germans blew up the monastery on August 3. A military chaplain camped nearby was able to save the reliquary with the remains of Bl. Guerric and a few other valuables.

As soon as the war was over, Bishop Marre began thinking of convoking the General Chapter. But he wanted the Germans to be able to take part, and thus had to wait for peace terms to be signed, so they could cross the border. Indeed, as he saw it, this was an important Chapter, because, now that his health was so impaired, he intended to present his resignation: "My more and more frequent attacks make any kind of extended work impossible" (June 20, 1919). The delay in signing the peace treaties forced him to put it off until the spring of 1920. The Chapter could finally meet on May 28.

As he had informed the abbots in a circular letter on April 29, and as he announced at the opening of the Chapter, Bishop Marre gave his resignation for health reasons, after having given his analysis of the Order's situation and recalling the measures that, according to his experience, were important for the Chapter to set as goals. He also presented an account of his administration, and pointed out that he had endowed the Generalate with a fund, the interest on which was enough to cover its expenses. But, at the instigation of the Abbot Vicar, Dom Bernard Chevalier, abbot of La Trappe, the assembly stated that moment had not yet come for him to set aside his office as General.[51] So he continued, but in slow motion.

Bishop Marre, who was still abbot of Igny, looked after his community. Reluctantly, he had to call back three monks who tried to resettle at Igny in shacks, because conditions there were insufficient for leading a wholesome life. Fr. Bonaventure stayed there alone, guarding the ruins. The community was dispersed, but still retained all its rights. In what was hoped would be a provisional arrangement, they gathered in buildings set aside for them at Cîteaux,[52] and it was there that Bishop Marre spent the years 1921–1922, except for two stays in Rome, in November 1921 (he had not been there for over five years) and in May 1922, which were occasions for him to be received in audience by Benedict XV and then Pius

51 At that time, people found it difficult to accept the idea of leaving office for health reasons. Benedict XV is said to have stated: "If the General can no longer visit the houses, let him govern the Order from his armchair." And Pius XI: "It would have been a sin for you to insist that they accept your resignation." And yet, he was so sure of its acceptance that he requested and obtained a delegation so that the newly elected Abbot General would be confirmed on the spot by the Vicar and preside over the Chapter's proceedings.

52 The idea was in place by July 20, 1920. It took them until November to move in.

XI.[53] The purpose of this last trip was to present the updated Constitution of the monks to the Holy See for approval.

At the Chapter in 1922, which followed close on his umpteenth heart attack, Bishop Marre once again planned to hand in his resignation. He did not prepare a long opening speech, but exhorted his peers one last time about their responsibilities as visitors and capitulants, and especially "to have the courage, based on fraternal charity, to impose the necessary sanctions to punish faults, correct negligence, and abolish excesses." It was toward the end of the Chapter that, in a letter read by the Vicar, Bishop Marre presented his resignation, citing the decline of his health. Moreover, with the Left being in a position to return to power, political events in France were likely to cause alarm; it was therefore best to proceed with the election without delay, while it was still possible to meet, and to choose an Abbot General able to deal with the situation. The assembly decided to accept his resignation. Bishop Marre continued to reside at Cîteaux with his sons of Igny. His successor, Dom Ollitrault de Kéryvallan, obtained from Pius XI the promise that Marre would be raised to the rank of archbishop. There was some delay, but the distinction was granted on August 16, 1923. When he was told a few months beforehand about this request on the part of the Order, and there being no doubt that it would be granted, Bishop Marre was stunned, dreading the responsibility before God implied by this title, which, however, entailed no particular pastoral duties.[54] This reaction was typical of his spiritual temperament.

Counting on war damage money, the rebuilding of Igny was always on his mind. In 1926, the money was made available on condition that it be used for reconstruction. It was an opportunity not to be missed. Since 1921, he had tried to obtain help in terms of personnel, and had even accepted the idea that another abbot could make a new foundation at Igny. But, failing in these efforts, he turned to the community of Laval, which accepted to take over Igny from the monks. Dom Marre was very concerned about the early stages of the reconstruction, and took interest in the plans for the new building. He got help from Fr. Hippolyte Verrier, the chaplain of the nuns at Laval, and appointed him as his successor as chairman of Igny's civil corporation, which had never been dissolved. The new Igny was indeed the work of Bishop Marre, even if it was completed after his death and was taken over by a new community. It was too late for his own community, which was unable to accept recruits where it was staying, and was aging. Although they

53 Dom Fabien returned to a monastic ambiance at Gethsemani from mid-October 1921 to early May 1922. He met up with Bishop Marre at Rome and stayed there until mid-July.

54 "I am crushed by this distinction: it was unforeseen and it terrifies me. Does God want me to be rewarded in this life for the little I might have done, holding back the exercise of his justice until I am in the next world? I wonder about this with terror… I accept the cross, humbly asking pardon for my sins" (Letter to Dom Ollitrault, December 23, 1922).

regretted that the restoration of Igny could not be started earlier, they realized that the situation was impossible, and, "submitting to a decision that meant the death of their community," the survivors gave their agreement in July 1926, turning over all of Igny's property to the Laval community.[55]

The "death" of Igny as a community of men was confirmed by an act of the 1927 General Chapter and by a decree from the Holy See. By then, Bishop Marre had passed away. He died a few days before the Chapter opened, at the age of 74, on September 6, 1927. He died unexpectedly in the course of an minor operation that ended up revealing the rather generalized infection that had confined him to bed during the last part of August. The funeral took place on September 9 at Cîteaux, presided by the Abbot General and many abbots, who were then arriving at Cîteaux for the General Chapter.

(*see Summary Table, next page*)

55 They reserved only an annual provision for each former monk of Igny, according to the 1924 statute, an allowance set at 1000 Francs by the 1927 Chapter.

SUMMARY TABLE

Year	Date	Bishop Marre and the Cistercian Order	Other Events
1853	November 16	Born at Aveyron (France)	
1872	December 26	Entered at Ste-Marie-du-Désert	
1876	January	Among the founders of Igny	
	March 25	Simple (perpetual) vows*	
	September 21	Subdeacon, during consecration of church	
1877		Deacon; Priest on November 18	
1879	May 22	Solemn Profession	
1880		Eviction threats	Laws against Congregations
1881	February 25	Prior (i.e., superior) of Igny	
1886	August 28	Igny raised to rank of abbey.	Bishop Langénieux of Reims
	September 6	Dom Marre abbot of Igny (until death)	made Cardinal in June
1892	October	Chapter of union of the 3 Trappist Congregations	
1893		At the Eucharistic Congress at Jerusalem	
1900	August 19	Ordained bishop (auxiliary of Reims)	
1901	July		Authorization law for Congregations
1902	July 30	Leo XIII's letter *Non mediocri*	Emile Combes government
1903	July 20		Death of Leo XIII
	August 4		Election of Pius X
1904	August 18	Death of Dom Wyart	
	October 8	Election of Bishop Marre as Abbot General	
1909		Trip to North America (USA and Canada)	
		Mariannhill breaks from Order	
1911	April	First serious heart attacks	
1914	August 2	May-October at Igny ;	Beginning of WWI
	August 20	October-April 1915 in Rome	Death of Pius X
	September 3		Election of Benedict XV
1915		(after Rome) Fille-Dieu, Igny, Cîteaux	
1916		April-May in Rome, then at Igny	Battle of Verdun
1917		At Laval since spring	Code of Canon Law, May 27
1918		August 3, destruction of Igny	November 11, armistice
1920	May 28	Opening of post-war General Chapter.	
	June 5	Bishop Marre resigns as Abbot General	
		General Chapter refuses.	
	November	Igny settles at Cîteaux	
1922	January 22		Death of Benedict XV
	February 6		Election of Pius XI
	September 18	Abbot General's resignation accepted	
1923	August 16	Titular Archbishop of Melitene	
1926		Igny monks give property to Laval	
1927	September 6	Death of Bishop Marre at 74	

2.4. A FEW ABBATIAL FIGURES OF THE ORDER'S FIRST FORTY YEARS

2.4.1. Dom Vital Lehodey (1857–1948), Abbot of Bricquebec 1893–1927

Dom Vital was born on December 17, 1857, in Normandy. He was baptized the following day, receiving the name Alcime. He was the fifth boy of a family of rural artisans, but the two eldest died a few days apart at a young age, probably of the same sickness. A little sister was born three years after Alcime, but she died at the age of two, shortly after his father's death at the age of 42 in July 1862. At the time, Alcime was only four and a half. The situation at home was critical: the mother had to provide a living for all of them, but her first aim was to raise sons with Christian convictions. Together with his brothers, Alcime attended a small local school run by a good Christian, the church's cantor, who was particularly attentive to children who aspired to the priesthood. Early on, it seems, Alcime showed signs of being called to serve God. As he wrote in his autobiography: "From my earliest years, I turned my thoughts and aspirations to God. I have never wanted anything else but to be for him alone." He made his first communion at the age of eleven and a half, and, after that, received communion on all the feast days. Had he been born a little later, he would have been delighted to take advantage of Pius X's promotion of early and frequent communion. Six months later his pastor began teaching him Latin. He then went to the minor seminary set up at Mortain in classrooms at the Abbaye-Blanche, an ancient Cistercian abbey in Normandy, abandoned since the Revolution. From there, in October 1876, as was natural, he went on to the major seminary at Coutances, run by the priests of Saint-Sulpice, who were greatly respected in the diocese. With the subdeaconate he made a definitive commitment to God on December 21, 1878, became deacon a year later, and priest on December 18, 1880.[56] Involved in parish ministry, he carried out the duties expected at the time: preaching at Mass, catechism, confessions, visits to the sick, etc. But after nine years, he felt drawn to monastic life, wanting to devote himself more fully to his sanctification by keeping a more rigorous and bracing discipline.

The bishop gave consent for him to go, but reluctantly, because he was one of the best theologians in the diocese. Fr. Lehodey arrived at Bricquebec on July 25, 1890. This monastery had been founded in 1824, by a diocesan priest, Fr. Augustin Onfroy, with help from the monks of Port-du-Salut. Upon taking the habit he was named Vital, after the founder of the Norman Congregation of Savigny, which was

56 The canonical age, however, was 24, according to the decrees of the Council of Trent.

affiliated to the Order of Cîteaux in 1147 in the Clairvaux line. L'Abbaye-Blanche, where Lehodey had studied for five years as boy, was founded by the sister of Saint Vital.

His novice master was younger than he, but it seems not to have been a problem for him. Nonetheless, the abbot, Dom Germain Furet, put him to work in the secretary's office even before finishing the novitiate, in order to introduce him to temporal administration. This work brought him into contact with a talkative and critical monk, which was upsetting for him. If monastic life was like that, why leave behind apostolic ministry! He quickly learned to put things in perspective and not to throw out the baby with the bathwater. He made simple vows on August 20, 1892. Soon after, he was appointed prior of the community, to help the abbot, who had been in poor health for six years.

In fact, the abbot died suddenly on October 19, 1893. The prior could not be elected abbot, because he had not yet made solemn profession, but the Father Immediate appointed him provisional superior. No doubt, for lack of experience and because of the austere bent of his training, he lacked discretion at the beginning, as he later admitted. In order to take part in the General Chapter on September 12 as an abbot, he was granted an indult that allowed him to make solemn profession six weeks early. The profession was on July 7, 1895. The next day was the abbatial election, with eleven monks in Holy Orders taking part. Dom Vital was elected unanimously, and received the abbatial blessing on August 1.

DOM VITAL LEHODEY (1857–1948), ABBOT OF BRICQUEBEC: FROM FEAR TO TRUST AND LOVE: A WINDING PATH...

(*by Fr. Yann Leroux, monk of Bricquebec*)

In his autobiography, Dom Vital sums up his experience in this way:

> I had sought sainthood at first in austerities, and certainly they have their value and we must bring ourselves to them with love. Later, I believed that I had found it in the ways of mental prayer, in the most intimate union of the spirit and the heart with God, and this was real progress. And now, I am doing my best to grasp it by holy littleness, with filial obedience and confident abandon. This is certainly much better. Is there something still higher? At this point, I do not believe so. (M. Niaussat, *Frère Vital ou le triomphe de la grâce* [DDB, 2007] 124)

This presentation will cover the three stages of this "winding path." All quota-

tions will be taken from his autobiography, except for an extract from his retreat journal.

1. *At First: Fear, Duty, and Pursuit of Austerities*

His mother, because she had to raise three young boys in poverty after the deaths of her husband and three children, was too busy to show him affection. The years in the minor seminary "were the worst of my life." In the confessional he came across justiciary confessors. He became scrupulous to the depths of his heart. He was afraid of God and not able to confide in him, a wound that he carried for the rest of his life. "Like so many others... I was led to see in God a Master and a Judge more than a Father and a Savior." He was a diocesan priest from 1880 to 1890, and he felt the weight of the responsibilities of this ministry. God attracted him:

> by the desire for a greater security and above all by the hope for sainthood... I immediately preferred the Trappist life for its austerity and for the integrity of its observance of the Rule.... I remember thinking as I approached the monastery how good it is to live with saints and how much better still to work to become one myself, and I said to Our Lord that if he granted me fifty years of religious life, I hoped to become one.

He threw himself into mortifications. He chastised his body to reassure himself, for in this way he showed God what he was capable of doing for him. He became superior in 1893, three years after his entry, and he remained superior for thirty-six years. He was anxious to be "the first to arrive at everything" and felt "the ambition to help our Lord to make some saints." Everyone had to do as he did. His anxiety pushed him to do more, so as not to risk doing less. He confused the end with the means, sainthood with the pursuit of austerities. This headlong rush left him in a nervous depression. Moreover, as a new superior, he reluctantly found himself embarked on the adventure of founding monasteries in Japan. His generosity was called into question at a General Chapter. After eight years at Bricquebec, here he was, in charge of three monasteries, two of which were on the other side of the world! Between 1900 and 1909, he worked very hard revising the *Spiritual Directory*.

2. *Real Progress: the Sweetness of the Child Jesus Initiates Him Into a Simpler Life of Prayer.*

"I want to be sweet to this forbidding God, to smile at this irritable God, to throw

myself into the arms of this God who pushes me away, to do for you a thousand tender acts, to adore your divine caprices and to bless your apparent cruelties." (Retreat Journal). How to get beyond such an image of God? The "grace of graces" was the entry of the Child Jesus into his life in 1895:

> Personally, I never saw or heard him. Everything happened between us on the level of faith. From time to time, he made me feel his presence and action more keenly. The veil that hid him became transparent. This was certainly not a clear vision, but neither was it entirely the obscurity of pure faith. Ordinarily, he was satisfied to attract my heart, and through my heart, my spirit and my will. But he kept himself hidden.... He made himself very small so that I would not be afraid to live with him.

Dom Vital rediscovered one of the expressions of the primitive Cistercian spirit.

> Everything that is found, as in miniature, in his tender infancy, is infinite in the Word. And, since the Word is the "Splendor of the Father and the Image of his Goodness," in comprehending my Little Jesus, I comprehend also his Father and the Holy Spirit: they are all three one, and at the same time infinite charity. Therefore, the sweet Infancy of my Little Jesus was for me like the "Beautiful Gate" (Acts 3:2) through which I was introduced a little, so little, alas, into the intimate sanctuary of his divinity.

An interesting detail: "It is the little Jesus at about the age of five who attracts me." Indeed, Dom Vital was the same age when he lost his father. He did all he could to show to the Infant Jesus, the only one whom he never feared, that he was loved:

> My life is spent performing a multitude of acts of love for him, acts of trust and abandon, but above all of love.... To stimulate my good will, I counted my little acts on my rosary in order not to fall below the measure I had set myself, which always grew larger. At the moment, to fulfill this task, I must set it before myself from the first hour of the day, and not lose a single one of my free moments.

It was the Infant God who taught him to leave discursive prayer behind:

> No sooner had he come into my life than he found me a mere novice in

> prayer. But he drew me toward him by the gentleness of his presence and action. He removed my facility for making varied and complicated acts of piety, and while leaving in me plenty of thoughts for the service of souls, he made it impossible for me to meditate under my own power. He drew me to him with strength and gentleness in the interior of my soul or he led me to linger over pictures of him.

However he adds: "I never knew how to remain in his presence in deep silence... but it was He, there was no doubt, who supplied me with feelings and words. He won the good will of my heart by this means, and united himself with it more closely." Confusing once again the means with the end, Dom Vital investigated prayer in depth and even dedicated a thick volume to it in 1906. But this was still only "real progress," as he saw later.

3. "*This is certainly much better: I am doing my best . . . by confident abandonment.*"

If Dom Vital loved God the wrong way round, the Infant Jesus led him to love the right way. He perceived in himself "a certain self-satisfaction when these graces occurred." Fear of not meriting the favours of the Infant Jesus incited him to redouble his efforts. And when the latter suggested that he change his path, Dom Vital responded: "Anything you like, as long as I do not offend you." The Infant Jesus introduced this new path to him for his good but he was so afraid to offend him that he was wary. "A new period soon began lasting about twenty years. Trials were to abound, but they came with graces of abandonment." With gentleness, the Infant God thus led him into the world of Love where everything is the kindness of divine affection. This is the reason for Holy Abandonment! What can we say or do if the love of God for us has any other cause than the joy that he feels for us in making us happy? What can we say or do if nothing on our part can provoke, or justify, or require such a love? Everything would fall into place and be simplified. Dom Vital had uncovered the deep meaning of the *Rule* of Saint Benedict:

> As my ideas ripened, I became especially aware of the chapter on humility, which is the heart of the *Rule*, the obedience that it recommends in every situation, and fraternal charity with mutual support. To the extent that this blessed attitude of the soul, which constitutes spiritual infancy, is perfected, it blossoms almost naturally into love and confidence, which lend so much charm to infants, and consequently into filial obedience and Holy

> Abandonment, which form the great path of sainthood. But I did not see or understand all this until much later.

At the end of the fifty years of monastic life for which he had asked in order to become a saint, he was stricken with paralysis. He hides nothing of how hard a trial it was for him, a trial that lasted five long years. "This state of infirmity left me in a state of continual subjugation, of humiliation, and abjection, which I dreaded more than death." This fear led Dom Vital to question right to the end whether the Infant Jesus truly loved him. In the drudgery of sainthood, he "did his best" to renounce counting on himself. This was the most difficult renunciation! "You must believe that Holy Abandonment is not easy to learn, and that I was a poor student since he (the Infant Jesus) judged it necessary to train me so hard, and in so hard a manner.

The long life of this "little abbot" (1.54 m—5 feet tall!), who was able to correct the pessimistic and too exclusively penitential spirit of the *Spiritual Directory*, had an influence that went beyond Cistercian communities. Those who value strength of will will admire his heroic asceticism. Others will focus on the various ways the Infant Jesus intervened. But their relationship during more than fifty years shows above all that God is obstinate in wanting human beings who are free. Dom Vital is a witness, not because holy abandonment came naturally to him, but on the contrary, because he traveled a particularly significant long "winding path." We are not able to be the source of love ourselves, but merely the mirrors of divine love, and broken mirrors at that. With his psyche remaining extremely wounded, Dom Vital entered fully into the Kingdom thanks to the Infant Jesus. The forthcoming edition of his Autobiography will allow a better view of the patient work of grace in him—and in every one of us—that we might learn love "the right way round."

DOM VITAL'S WORK FOR THE ORDER

The Foundations in Japan

Dom Bernard Favre, prior of Our Lady of Consolation in China, thinking he could avail himself of a permission received from the 1891 General Chapter of his Congregation, promised the Vicar Apostolic of Hakodate that a foundation would begin in Japan, on Hokaido, in October 1896. Faced with this *fait accompli*, the General Chapter that year nonetheless accepted the idea of foundations, both for monks and for nuns. But it still remained to find founders. As for the monks, Dom Bernard found five, along with a novice and a lay brother, from various communities. He got them set up in Japan that October, and then returned to China….

Before the General Chapter, he had gone through Bricquebec, where he seems to have kindled a missionary flame in the heart of the prior, Fr. Gerard Peullier, who revealed to his abbot his desire to go the Land of the Rising Sun. Dom Wyart appointed him superior of the group that was already in Japan, where he arrived in January 1897. But the story was not yet over: in January 1898, Dom Vital was asked to take on the paternity of the new monastery. After raising a few objections, the community and its abbot accepted the request. The step was ratified at the next General Chapter, in April 1898: Bricquebec's paternity was also to include the nuns, who had come from Ubexy to settle about twenty miles from Our Lady of Phare. Without delay, Dom Vital sent an additional two priests and a third as chaplain of the nuns, along with a lay brother.…

It is not our purpose here to cover the history of the monasteries of Japan, which really only began to grow a decade or two later. Suffice it to say that Dom Vital Lehodey's dedication and discernment were decisive in getting Cistercian monasticism off to a good start in Japan, in spite of the fact that his health prevented him from making the regular visitations himself after his visits in 1900 and 1909. Both trips lasted several months, and some of the ocean crossings ruined his stomach for a long time. These foundations required much sacrifice on the part of Bricquebec, both in personnel and in financial aid. The abbot's health was seriously compromised in the years 1910–1912, caused, as he admitted, by overworking and not keeping a good balance. He regained his strength bit by bit, but was never completely restored, which often left him in varying states of depression.

Among the things the General Chapter commissioned him to do was the revision of the 1869 *Spiritual Directory*, which no longer corresponded to the Order's evolution. The work was entrusted to him in 1900, a sign of the esteem in which he was held among his colleagues.

The directories had their origins in the *Consuetudines* published by various monastic Orders as a way of integrating and adapting the Rule and the Usages. It is well known that the customaries of seventh through the twelfth centuries (from Farfa, Cluny, Monte Cassino, Subiaco, Vallombrosa, and others) contributed greatly to the promotion of observance and uniformity in monastic life throughout the various nations of Europe.[57] Cîteaux also published its concrete applications of the Rule. The early Cistercian documents include, along with historical and hagiographical narratives, the collections of *Statuta*, *Institutiones*, and *Capitula*, which record the characteristic observances of Cîteaux according to decisions taken by the General Chapters over the years. In the modern period, up to the Second Vatican Council, the Order built up a juridical and spiritual "corpus"

57 See Ambrogio Sanna, OFMConv, art. "Direttorio," *Dizionario degli Istituti di Perfezione*, 3:524–30.

that included the Constitutions, approved by the Holy See, a fundamental document that lays the foundations of the Order, along with other books: the Ritual or Ceremonial, Usages, books of the Liturgy of the Hours, etc.

But a "directory" is not, strictly speaking, a juridical book. It is intended more as a user's guide to norms, explaining how best to live them out. In recalling these norms, it also elaborates on the theological and spiritual principles that are their base and motivation. In a sense, a directory is a document for private use within the Institute that draws it up, to keep the Institute in good working order. In the seventeenth century, the two most influential directories of this type were those by Saint Francis de Sales and Saint Jeanne de Chantal. Dom Augustin de Lestrange composed a book of Instructions for his novices, containing "spiritual advice taken from various works" (after the fashion of older anthologies).

At the request of other abbots, Dom Antoine Bernard, abbot of Melleray, asked his prior, Fr. Benoît Moyne, a former canon of Avignon, drawn to Trappist life by its spirit of rigor and austerity, to draft a directory. In 1868, this new work was submitted to a commission that considered it "a good book," and allowed it to be printed. At the 1869 General Chapter of the three Trappist Congregations, a copy was given to each of the participants. Assessments of it varied. Some thought highly of it and used it for the training of novices. Others lamented its excessive severity and its too exclusively penitential spirit. This spirit most likely came from a negative attitude of mistrust with regard to the body, which was seen as an enemy or a trap (p. 480). This mistrust extended to all that is "natural," for one was to be afraid even of the scent of flowers (p. 262). Of course, it acknowledges that all observance must be inspired by charity, because it is charity that lightens the burden and makes it sweet to carry. Trappists are joyful. But love is quickly made the equivalent of immolation and sacrifice. The monk comes "away from the world to solitude *solely* to suffer" (p. 319), and the purpose of the directory, as is said in the preface, is "to provide all the different possible means for making our life of work a life of sacrifice" (p. 4). The monk "fights with nature in all things, in order to grant it no more than what is strictly necessary, and in order to find opportunities for sacrifice even in the satisfaction of basic needs" (p. 35). "Make each one's actions a penance, that is, do everything so meticulously that it always involves some suffering" (p. 341). It goes so far as to advise the monk to prefer looking at sad and gloomy things and at the least pleasant persons, turning away from what would be satisfying to see (p. 318). From the moment he takes the habit, the novice "will consider himself a victim already removed from the world and ready to be deprived of everything and immolated" (p. 62). It goes on to say that this principle applies all the more to the lay brothers, the color of whose habit expresses that they are "*exclusively* penitent men" (p. 58).

The General Chapter wanted to free itself from this spirit, and appointed Dom Lehodey to revise the Directory accordingly.[58] The Abbot General, Dom Sébastien Wyart became the spokesman for this desire, and wrote Lehodey on April 5, 1901: "Allow me to ask you to give us some day not a Trappistic [sic] Directory, but one that is thoroughly Cistercian." And on the following June 5, he added:

> Do not be afraid to modify its composition, to cut out chapters, and to write new ones. As you write, constantly keep in front of you the Holy Rule, the Constitutions, and the Usages, as our earliest ancestors composed them. May this book be full of the spirit of Saint Benedict. Get rid of the name *Trappist*, and replace it with the true name *Cistercian*. This is an important change if we are to attain uniformity and unity in everything in our Order.[59]

Lehodey got to work right away, but he was slowed down by sickness and many obligations. It was only in 1908–1909 that the book was turned over to the examination of the censors.

The outline he used was exactly that of the former directory, which followed the stages of monastic commitment (postulancy, novitiate, profession), and, after recalling the general duties of monastic life, focused more on the sequence of events of the day, the week, the year, and, lastly, of the time of sickness and death.

Some sections—a little under 30% of the book, according to one count[60]—remained unchanged, but in many other places Dom Lehodey eliminated the kinds of reflections cited above that betrayed a conception of monastic life overly oriented toward the pursuit of suffering and penance, even if it was motivated by love. He often takes the opposite view, saying, for example, like Francis de Sales, that it is not a general rule to do everything that one finds repugnant.[61] He focuses attention more on prayer and contemplation, and preaches trust more than a somewhat Jansenistic fear. The former directory saw danger everywhere, and urged being on guard, lest one fall. Dom Lehodey is more positive in his concepts, and leaves out the long examination of conscience (over 11 pages) that the former directory added on as an appendix to the book. He nuances his thought on arbitrary penances, presupposing that the superior has the positive intention of leading monks to self-denial. He is more prudent and moderate in recommending pious practices and devotions that might take time away from *lectio*.

58 By the end of the century, this Directory was somewhat neglected in certain communities.

59 Letters cited by Bruno Brard, *Dom Vital Lehodey* (Paris, 1973) 90–91.

60 According to Brard, p. 98.

61 But he maintains the bit about fearing the scent of flowers, even though he does eliminate what is said about the inappropriateness of growing flowers, even for decorating the altar.

Dom Lehodey no doubt felt somewhat hemmed in by the former Directory, and followed it rather closely. He chose, rather, to give free reign to his own thoughts by writing a long introduction, in seven chapters, that gives an overview of the spiritual life and its stages, leading to "perfection," which is holiness in love. In this introduction, he states that contemplation is the first, immediate, and essential goal to which all our observances are subordinated. The spirit of penance is, of course, one of the elements of the spiritual life, but it is out of place always to be looking for suffering and to be depriving oneself of satisfactions that are allowed.

This introduction echoes the author's own experience, as described above. Given over to austerities early on, even to the point of ruining his health (following the example of Saint Bernard), in 1895 he had the famed experience of the visit of the Child-Word. This "abbreviated Word" came silently into his life, making significant changes, and leading first to contemplation and then to filial trust and abandonment, none of which lessened the austerity of his life.

The text of the Directory was again revised in 1924, by Dom Lehodey himself, at the time in bad health, to bring it into accord with the new 1917 Code of Canon Law. After Vatican II, the new juridical texts are written in a more spiritual manner, eliminating the need for a Directory. Admittedly, the style of the Direcory seems old-fashioned to us. We prefer evolving with greater freedom of thought.

THE WAYS OF MENTAL PRAYER

Although the Directory speaks of prayer, it did so in a way that, for Dom Lehodey, was too restrained. While revising the book, he began working on what he called a "directory of mental prayer." The book was intended specifically for Cistercians. It is divided into three parts: general notions, methods or equivalent practices, and mystical contemplation.

The first draft was ready in 1902, and was submitted to the Order's censor, who, at that time, was Dom Symphorien Bernigaud. The main point of discussion between them was the question of methods. Dom Symphorien, a monk of Sept-Fons, was chosen by Dom Wyart as secretary in 1896, a position he continued to hold under Bishop Marre until his health began to fail in 1907. He was elected Definitor in 1898, and would continue in that capacity until his death in 1913, at the age of 63. Author of an oddly organized commentary on the Rule that came out in 1909,[62] he also became well known for the letters he wrote to his younger brother, a novice at Sept-Fons, on the Benedictine "method" of prayer, which he

62 It is made up of 400 little chapters, always with three points, that comment on quotations from the Rule, following the order of the chapters.

later turned into a book.[63] His main principle is that one should not be overly bound to the methods that sprang up beginning in the sixteenth century. Prayer is not essentially a private exercise of meditation that is fit into some free moment of the day; rather, it must be the habitual state of being in which the monk lives. Certainly, at times, the needs of the heart incite the monk to prostrate himself before the tabernacle in tears of gratitude, but one must aim to live in God's presence in all of one's activities. It is a heart-to-heart rapport, rather than an exercise of the intelligence. It is the Divine Office and *lectio divina* that nourish this heart-to-heart encounter. The author does not understand how some novice masters can compile modern authors, picking out the best methods, putting them together, and turning them into a didactic treatise that, in his opinion, is more an obstacle to prayer than a help. He does not completely reject the use of such methods in certain circumstances (to revive a faltering flame after a time of overwork or dispersion), but it is a last resort that should quickly be put aside.

So, could Dom Symphorien understand and appreciate Dom Lehodey's views? He found the second part of the book non-Cistercian and overly complicated. Dom Vital took his inspiration from the Jesuits, Sulpicians, and all sorts of others, rather than from monastic authors of the Middle Ages. Dom Symphorien did not beat around the bush when he wrote him that he did not care for his elaborations. With Norman tenacity, and with his education as it was (more from the seminary than from the monastery), Dom Lehodey merely nuanced his thought, maintaining his positions in the final version of his book, which came out in 1908, under the title *The Ways of Mental Prayer*. After all, the exercise of prayer is part of the modern monastic schedule.

As for the third part on mystical prayer, Dom Symphorien humbly acknowledged that he was out of his depth. This part seemed to him to be beyond the scope of the average religious. Dom Vital corresponded primarily with Fr. Poulain, Jesuit, and author of a manual that became a reference book (*The Graces of Interior Prayer: A Treatise on Mystical Theology*, 1901). The Jesuit approved of the book on the whole and gave some helpful advice. Dom Vital wanted to speak out against the mistrust current at the time—and which continued into the 1930s—toward anything that might be suspected as hysterics or as exaggerations along the lines of the *Alumbrados* in sixteenth-century Spain or the Quietists of seventeenth-century France. He wanted to make mysticism more available to a larger audience, and he feared that some confessors prevented monks and nuns from pursuing their attraction toward contemplation and mysticism. As he saw it, there was a certain correspondence between holiness and the level of prayer. He won

63 The letters were published in Italian in 1943, under the care of Dom Léon Erhard, abbot of Tre Fontane. The French version was published in the "Pain de Citeaux" collection (Chambarand, 1963; second printing 1968).

out in the end, and Dom Symphorien, given Dom Sébastien Wyart's approval, acknowledged that he might have been mistaken:

> It is my wholehearted wish that, by getting a glimpse of the graces God has in store for prayerful souls, many in our Order will desire to enter into this union with God and there find true life and complete purification. Therefore, since the Very Reverend Father allows it, do as you wish in the third part.[64]

The book received strong approvals and went through several editions. Its value came from the fact that Dom Vital spoke from experience: "What I know best in this area, as in everything else, I owe to my beloved, the interior Little Master" (Autobiography, pp. 36–37).

In our day, traditional Christian awareness is quite at ease with the notion that mystical experience, as an experience of union with the Lord Jesus, is the one and only desirable and possible goal of Christian life for the baptized. In order for this experience of faith to become a real possibility in daily life, there is need for progressive purification and liberation. One of the tasks of Cistercian monasticism is to rediscover the possibility of a continual relationship of faith with the Lord. Monastic tradition, in fact, does not speak predominantly of contemplation or mysticism, as can be seen in the sobriety of language in our current Constitutions 20 and 22:

> By constantly cultivating mindfulness of God, the brothers extend the Work of God throughout the whole day. The abbot is to see to it that each one has ample leisure to give himself to lectio and prayer. Furthermore, all should take care that the monastic environment is favourable to silence and quiet. (C. 20)
> In a spirit of compunction and intense desire, monks devote themselves frequently to prayer. While dwelling on earth, their minds are occupied with heavenly things, desiring eternal life with all spiritual longing. May the Blessed Virgin Mary who was taken up into heaven, the life and sweetness and hope of all earthly pilgrims, never be far from their hearts. (C. 22)

For Dom Bernardo Olivera, the current Abbot General, this experience has to do with mysticism:

> –It is knowledge, i.e., the fruit of dwelling in what has been received.

64 Quoted by Bruno Brard, p. 110.

> –It is experience, i.e., integrally human experience authenticated in a relationship. [...]
>
> It is an integral experience determined by relationship with God, who communicates himself in Christ. Or, it is a faith-filled knowledge that receives divine revelation in Christ. These thoughts can be enriched with the words of Saint Thomas: "…this understanding or connaturality with things divine comes from the charity that unites us to God. It therefore has to do with wisdom and the gift of the Holy Spirit, making possible the mutual indwelling of the lover with the beloved (Summa Theologica II, II, 45, 2, c; see also I, 1, 6, ad 3; I, II, 28, 2).[65]

Dom Bernardo goes on to say:

> Christian mystical experience is therefore a modality of faith, a particular way of living the faith. It is at the service of faith, is discerned by faith, and bears witness to faith. It exists only within the faith of the Church, that is to say, it is linked with the sacramental celebration of the faith and with the reading of the Word of God as believers and as a Church.

HOLY ABANDONMENT … UNTO DEATH

Dom Vital once again showed himself a master of the spiritual life with his book on *Holy Abandonment*. His correspondence with Fr. Poulain gave him the chance to articulate his thought on "letting God act." Ten years later, talking it over with a Capuchin who preached the retreat at Bricquebec, he decided to write on Abandonment, which he considered to be the summit of the spiritual life and "the true path of holiness for our contemplative religious" (Brard, p. 164). It has to do with keeping the proper balance between activism, which infringes on Providence, and passivity, which undervalues human effort. The first part of the book attempts to define and situate Holy Abandonment. Abandonment is to be practiced even with regard to mystical graces and contemplation. "Contemplation is to be sought only to the extent that God wants it for us. One thus remains well ordered and at peace, avoiding sadness and discouragement in the case of failure" (p. 428). The book, completed in 1917, was not published until 1919. In January 1921, Cardinal Gaspari communicated Benedict XV's congratulations to the author. This book also was

65 Bernardo Olivera, Sol en la noche (Burgos, 2001) p. 83.

the fruit of his experience: "There is nothing in this book that I do not know by experience."

But Dom Vital was worn out. In 1927, he was unable to attend the General Chapter. He considered resigning, even though he was under 70; he had already been shouldering the burden as superior for 34 years. Difficulty in finding a successor in the community caused him to put it off. Nevertheless, in a 1929 letter to the Abbot General, he firmly presented his resignation, and it was accepted. Abbot emeritus for nearly 20 years, he remained at Bricquebec, receiving those who came to him for direction, and teaching theology to the younger brothers until 1936. The last years of his life were difficult: struck with paralysis, he became completely dependent, the true test of abandonment!

A monk of Timadeuc, Fr. Louis Kervingant, proposed to the community's vote, was elected abbot to succeed him. Just four years later Dom Louis was the victim of a car accident on June 3, 1933. On August 7, the monastery's cellarer, Fr. Raphael Gouraud, was elected abbot. That afternoon, he visited the bishop, accompanied by the Procurator General, Dom Fabien Dutter, whom he intended to drop off at the train station, along with Dom Berchmans Chauveau, former abbot of Port-du-Salut. But, coming to an intersection, there was yet another car accident. Dom Fabien was killed on impact. The newly elected abbot's ribcage was crushed: he died the next day.[66] These events were hard trials for the community and for Dom Vital. Fr. Maur Daniel, from Timadeuc, took up the succession, but for only six years. It was thus under his fourth successor, Dom Joseph Marquis, elected in 1940, that Dom Vital passed away, on May 6, 1948, during the conventual Mass of the Ascension, as the celebrant intoned the Our Father.

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66 Dom Berchmans, with both legs broken, died three months later.

2.4.2 Dom Jean-Baptiste Chautard (1858–1935)

(*This text, by Dom Patrick Olive, Abbot of Sept-Fons, was published in* Collectanea *in 1985. With the author's permission, some biographical details have been added*)

This brief sketch relies, of course, on the biographies of Dom Chautard that have come out over the years, but also on personal recollections gathered from older monks who lived with him, and on documents, including photographs preserved in the archives of the monastery, and especially a long letter from 1881 (cited as L. 1881) in which, through a dozen long, closely filled pages, P. Jean-Baptiste, then sub-deacon, attempted to explain to his father the course of his life.

Gustave Chautard belonged to that generation spanning the nineteenth and twentieth centuries—born under the Second Empire (1858), he died on the eve of the Front Populaire (1935)—to which real upheavals, both social and cultural, were all too familiar. Too young to take part in the war of 1870, and too old for the war of 1914, he escaped the dangers of combat. Contemporary of Lyautey,[67] de Barrès, and de Briand, born in the same year as Charles de Foucauld, he lived in an era when the Church herself faced serious questions. And he lived under five great popes, from Pius IX to Pius XI.

Born to a bourgeois family of the town of Briançon, he spent his childhood between an educated but unbelieving father, bookseller by profession, and a mother full of faith, who secured for him a religious education by placing him in a school run by the Trinitarian sisters. After an intense mystical experience during his boyhood, it seemed that the young Gustave let his faith grow lukewarm, little by little, due perhaps to the influence of his father, whose importance to him increased as he grew. His personality was already very pronounced—the photos are very revealing of this—and his talents oriented him toward a commercial career, so he entered the school of commerce at Marseille. "This character, uncompromising, absolute, was certainly not a perfect one, I admit; but as you have noticed, from my earliest years, it always dominated me imperiously" (L. 1881). From this point on, his future seemed mapped out; his influential relatives assured him of a brilliant position. But a new experience of God radically changed his life.

67 Lyautey (1854–1934) was Marshal of France and peacemaker in Morocco (1912–1925). Barrès (1862–1923) was a writer and the intellectual leader of a patriotic and nationalistic movement during WWI. Briand (1862–1923) was a French socialist politician and spokesman for the July 1901 law against the Congregations. As minister of foreign affairs, he sought to lay firmer foundations for peace, but was not successful. He received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1926.

> ...with the character, the temperament that I have, it was necessary that I feel either entirely in the world or entirely with God... I needed something more... I needed the religious life... Understand that, independent of the constraints of my own character—at all times carried to extremes in every matter—I have other serious motives: a true need for religious life, in particular monastic life... (L. 1881)

Let him recount the event himself:

> ... regarding the day when the grace of God deigned to touch my heart and shine in my spirit, it seems to me that I was born to a new day, to new feelings that ennobled all those of which I could only have had an abstract idea before this. The feast of All-Saints marked the beginning of this new life. For three or four weeks, in the midst of an inexpressible peace, which was above all entirely intimate, entirely peaceful, and which I have never since experienced again so profoundly... I found myself completely surprised at such a change. I loved to walk alone to enjoy this ease, unknown to me up to this point in my life, in thinking of things of Heaven that had interested me so little a week before.... This peace, so joyful, passed nearly as suddenly as it had come, and interior trials began for me. There remained within me only a vehement desire to give myself to God.... I remained for about eighteen months, which is to say until I entered Aiguebelle, in interior afflictions... nearly without interruption. I must say that during these afflictions, this sickly weariness, I never had a moment's regret for my original resolution to search for God by every means that He had given to me, to run after the ray of light of which I had caught a glimpse during those three or four weeks. I see today that the Good Lord was supporting me by His grace even then, although without my being aware, to prevent me from being discouraged by the difficulties of the way. (L. 1881)

In April 1877, he entered the Trappist monastery of Aiguebelle, thus breaking with his relatives, and even with his father.

> During the first month of my stay at Aiguebelle, the trials gave way to a true enthusiasm caused by the novelty of this life of the cloister for which I had so long yearned. But from the time I began to feel the monotony of the Trappist life, from the time when there was nothing new to do, this existence, in which the days differ only in the greater or lesser length of the offices of the day and of the night, began to seem unbearable to me and not

> at all to meet my expectations, even regarding the help needed to sanctify oneself. Certainly this was a new trial.
>
> I spent my novitiate in this uncertainty. I made my profession without hesitation,[68] nearly in the midst of these involuntary perplexities, without regarding them as important... (L. 881)

But soon enough the talents of the young monk were put to use. In an age when the economies of our monasteries were not always exactly flourishing, such talents could not be overlooked. It was up to him to find an equilibrium between this activity, which he had not sought out, and the life with God to which he aspired. His encounter with a holy monk, Dom Jean, the abbot of Fontfroide, gave him the key to his situation in the form of a saying that he loved to repeat: "Do nothing; let nothing just happen; make it happen!"

Very soon, as well, he would be brought in to help other communities in difficulty, and so, for the remainder of his life, he would be engaged in an incredible network of relationships that pulled at him from all sides. In March 1895, Dom Wyart appointed him to take care of the purchase of Cîteaux.[69] He was brought in to help the abbey of Chambarand, near Grenoble, then populated with monks from Sept-Fons, and it was to him that they turned when it was time to elect their abbot in 1897. The photograph of the abbatial blessing (July 1) shows a young man of 39, strong-willed and sure of himself, apparently little impressed by the event, with an expression looking toward the future, and, in his eyes, a great depth of peace.[70]

He barely passed through this monastery, however, for, two years later, he was elected abbot of Sept-Fons, the motherhouse of Chambarand. He resisted for three months before accepting this charge at the invitation of the Pope. He understood only too well what awaited him. Dom Sébastien Wyart, who had held both the office of Abbot General and of the abbot of Sept-Fons concurrently since 1892, had not been able to attend to the interests of his house as he would have wished, and, among other troubles, the economic situation was disastrous. Dom Jean-Baptiste was counted on to clean it up. It took him the whole long term, 36 years, of his abbacy to see this work through to a successful conclusion, not without suffering, worries, labors and cares, which he bore nearly single-handed. He kept in front of him, on his desk, a small visiting card of Cardinal Mazella, saying that the Holy Father wished to see Father Jean-Baptiste accept the abbacy of Sept-Fons. The card was for him reassuring token of the obedience with which he carried out work that was often unmonastic. He was installed as abbot on August 22, 1899.

68 Simple profession on May 8, 1879; solemn profession on May 21, 1882.

69 The purchase was made in October 1898. See § 1.5.

70 He had been ordained priest on June 3, 1884.

From the years of his abbacy at Sept-Fons, several facets of the portrait of Dom Chautard may be drawn. Sparing in his confidences, these facets may be discerned above all in his life.

He was resolutely a *man of his times*, which was unusual and rare enough in "Church circles" to be worth noting. Of necessity a great traveler, he founded two houses in Brazil,[71] visited his filiations in China and in Palestine, and was not afraid to be absent for long periods in order to look after the well-being of those entrusted to his care.[72]

In contrast to the superiors of other monastic families, he believed that it was a duty, in 1904, to counter the laws of eviction and, of course, was designated to negotiate with the government. He himself often spoke about his relationship with the president of the Senate, Georges Clémenceau, and about his plea before the commission charged with ruling on the fate of the Trappists.[73] This attitude with regard to authorities that were not, so it seems, favorable to the Church, showed a great clear-sightedness little shared by the ecclesiastics of the day, who hesitated to be "compromised" with the Republic. Less well known, but along the same lines, was his relationship with Joseph Caillaux, another man who was not exactly a pillar of the Church.[74] Dom Chautard was faithful to him during the sad "Figaro" affair.

Understanding the value of a doctrine that was simple and easy to communicate, in 1907 he wrote what became *The Soul of the Apostolate*, published in 1913, the first version of which was praised by Pius X and enjoyed popular success. Nor did he hesitate to cooperate with a project to make a film on the monastic life. The Pathé studio, therefore, came to Sept-Fons to make one of the first talking pictures, in 1932. Not everyone shared the breadth of view of the Abbot of Sept-Fons, but the fear of seeing a fake monastery created in a studio brought his cooperation.

Finally let us note something that not everyone would call "social action," but

71 In 1904, Maristella, a house of monks, and, in 1909, Tréménbé, a house of nuns from Macon; both houses were intended as possible refuges in case of eviction from France. These communities were a cause of concern for Dom Chautard until they were repatriated to Europe in 1927.

72 It took six weeks to reach China by boat, then two days riding a mule to reach the monastery. Sometimes, however, he had to extend his stay, in order to visit the monasteries in Japan. Dom Chautard went to China in 1906 and 1929. The General Chapter entrusted Dom Delauze, abbot of Dombes and then of Aiguebelle, with making some regular visitations in China, before his 1933 appointment as special visitor to the houses of the Far East, without detriment to the rights of the Fathers Immediate; the arrangement must have been a relief for them. This system ceased in 1947.

73 Dom J. B. Chautard, *L'Ame cistercienne*, D.R.A.C. 1931; concerning these occurrences, see § 2.2.

74 J. Caillaux (1863–1944), politician of the left, was several times minister of finance and even chief of government (1911–1912). His wife, who could no longer put up with the violent and slanderous press campaign against him, went and killed the director of the newspaper Le Figaro in 1914, which forced Caillaux to resign his position as minister. Accused of corresponding with the enemy, he was condemned in 1917, and then received amnesty in 1925.

that represented in his day a concern that was very important to him: he made the chocolate factory at Aiguebelle a model in which the social teaching of the Church was conveyed in practical terms.

Throughout the whole of his abbacy, and despite the fact that he was preoccupied constantly with material cares, he showed himself to be a true master of the spiritual life:

> Dom Chautard was a single-minded master regarding what is essential to the monastic vocation: prayer. "My child, have you prayed?"—this was always the opening line when he met with one of his monks. By such insistence, which corresponded to his own conviction, he left a mark on our spirits; he gave us an impetus for the rest of our lives. It is a Father's job to set priorities once and for all.
>
> Dom Chautard loved the Holy Scriptures, especially the Gospels and the letters of Paul. He had suffered from the paucity of spiritual writing produced at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. Henri Brémond had not yet called attention to the interest inherent in earlier spiritual writers. Nevertheless, Dom Chautard was able to find several acceptable authors: Bishop Gay, Bishop de Ségur, Father Saudreau, Dom Vital Lehodey, and later, Dom Marmion. He appreciated the little volume entitled *L'Esprit de Sainte Thérèse de l'Enfant-Jésus*.[75] Among earlier authors, he was able to choose the Jesuits Grou and Lallemand; he often cited de Bossuet's little treatise *A Short and Easy Way to Pray with Faith*; from Saint Francis de Sales, his *Spiritual Conferences*; several letters from Saint Jane de Chantal on prayer. Going still further back, he loved the writings of Saint Teresa of Avila, *Conferences* IX and X of Cassian, and, of course, the *Rule* of our Father Saint Benedict, from which he drew principles of the spiritual life in every circumstance.
>
> Dom Chautard cultivated spiritual learning, he welcomed every pertinent inquiry, he understood everyone's problems. But when he taught, you paid attention!... Dom Chautard well understood how to be peremptory: "By this road, my son, you will never reach union with God." What he said, he said, and it was up to you to determine the consequences.[76]

Extremely conscientious about the value of others, he understood how to discern and to welcome anything that could be of help to his brothers:

75 This was the beginning of an exchange of letters with Céline, the sister of Saint Thérèse.
76 Fr. Jérôme, *Ecrits monastiques* (Le Sarment, 2002) p. 332.

> Dom Chautard lived, if I dare say so, in the heart of the Holy Rule. He showed himself, sincerely, to be its servant and its admirer, before being, as was his function, its interpreter. Also, for him, as for us, his brothers, his teaching and his example reached a fitting high point when, in 1931 I believe, a monk, still young, prior of the Abbey of Chimay, came to preach our annual retreat. This monk's name was Dom Godefroid Belorgey.... At the end of the conference, in which he had explained the fourth degree of humility, that is to say, aridity in prayer, its significance, its value for testing, and the necessity of perseverance, Dom Chautard waited until the preacher had left the room, then standing up he said to all of us, in a serious voice full of emotion: "Here is what I have so long waited for. My children, here is what we must retain and practice. The whole sense of our life is here."[77]

But above all, the dominant trait of his personality was that he was the Father of his community and of so many others, monks and nuns. A man of great feeling, the very austere environment of our monasteries, no doubt, did not permit him to show it as much as he might have wanted, but many small traces of it have been kept or found. Thus, when he was absent, which was often, he never neglected to mark the feasts of his monks with a few words; thus he faithfully wrote regularly to his absent monks. One monk, at the time in military service, has preserved a precious letter, full of delicacy, and always oriented toward spiritual realities.[78]

His fondness for his "little ones" allows us to find among the lay sisters some pictures with a personal message from him on the back, a witness to his ever-attentive solicitude.

With an unerring spiritual sense, seeing beyond appearances, he discerned men of worth. It was to a lay brother, at first glance an unremarkable monk, that he confided his most serious intentions: he recognized him as a person close to God.

Father of his monks, he worked to the point of exhaustion to ensure for them a decent life, and, as he did for Sept-Fons, he did also for not a few other monasteries.[79] His healthy realism gave him an eye for solid work and made him see that a sound economy could ensure greater freedom for a God-centered life. He did not

77 Fr. Jérôme, *Ecrits monastiques* (Le Sarment, 2002) p. 141 and following.

78 During the war of 1914–1918, with the help of an official title as chaplain or of a Red Cross armband, he managed four times to visit some of his mobilized monks, even on the front lines. Upon the request of Cardinal Sevin, Archbishop of Lyon, to whom he had suggested the creation of the periodical, he wrote a monthly letter for "Le prêtre aux armées."

79 Because of his competence in economic matters, he was often called on to resolve embarrassing situations, which were sometimes the result of poor management or even of serious mistakes, as at Tilburg in 1909 or at La Trappe in 1911. He had to take on the paternity of Tiburg and Belval for a period of ten years.

always enjoy the fruits of his labors but we are still profiting from his work even today.

In conclusion, it does not seem to us out of place to relate the following little story, which reveals another of Dom Jean-Baptiste's personality traits, one that was sufficiently exceptional that people like to recall it. He had a sense of humor, which, no doubt, saved him from many illusions about himself and from many difficulties in his relations with others:

> One particular year, he had been delegated to visit the abbey of Timadeuc, in Brittany. But, during this same time, the "day of atonement" of the Bretons was being celebrated at St. Anne d' Auray.... Dom Chautard let himself be drawn into this celebration. After the ceremony, there was a meal that brought together bishops, prelates, canons and priests who were participating. At the end of the meal, Dom Chautard was asked to give a toast. He stood up and said: "At another time, I would have doubted the legend according to which the great Saint Anne had come to Brittany. But today, I doubt it no longer; and this is what has converted me, the fact that she herself has appeared to me during this magnificent ceremony. Yes, in person. She appeared to tell me this: 'I am very touched by the honor you have done me by joining my devoted followers. However, you are a monk, and because you are a monk, you would have done me much more honor and would have in any case been better off simply by staying within the walls of your monastery.'"

The audience, composed mostly of Bretons, must have appreciated this little story; Bretons, men of the sea, understand entirely that under no pretext should a captain leave his ship. Dom Chautard could thus upbraid himself, and in public; for, although he had to travel often, he was always very loyal, never permitting himself to prolong his absences, either for a rest or out of curiosity. And, for fear of acquiring a taste for these trips, he strove always to make them, for himself, discreetly uncomfortable.[80]

The last three months of his life were a time of great suffering and at the same time a period of intense activity. He had no illusions: he was at the mercy of heart disease and the likelihood of sudden death. He was more and more worn out. After the 1934 General Chapter, the Abbot General ordered him to take three months of rest, but he took only three weeks. It was thought he would enjoy being in Savoy, within sight of Mont-Blanc, but, since it was October, the hotel was not

80 Fr. Jérôme, *Ecrits monastiques*, p. 397.

yet heated, and he caught cold. In the first months of 1935, the fainting spells became more and more frequent. He nonetheless took part in the General Chapter that September, at which time Orval was raised to the rank of abbey. He planned to deliver this news in person to the community in Belgium, but the Lord did not leave him enough time. On September 29, he was supposed to give the novice habit to a former boy scout from Creusot. There were forty scouts present in the chapter room, along with their general chaplain, canon Cornette… But they waited for him in vain. He was found on the floor of the cloister at the chapter door: it was the end. At his funeral on October 3, his friend Dom Anselme le Bail gave the homily. As his biographer wrote in 1982: "Dom Chautard lead a hectic life, often in the midst of tragic situations. He generously gave himself over to God's mercy, and God did not disappoint his expectation. With virtues that were often heroic, along with what were admittedly defects, and in the midst of successes and failures, he followed Christ step by step, in the company of Our Lady, and he found true happiness."[81]

2.4.3. Dom André Malet (1862–1936)

Faced with a world that was seeking to eliminate the supernatural from history, there arose a generation of men and women, whose lives bore witness to the fact that the supernatural—lived experience that becomes culture—is undeniable and that it has a name: Jesus Christ, Son of God. Among these men were the young Blessed Fr. Joseph Cassant,[82] representative of turn-of-the-century Trappist life at its simplest and most anonymous, and his spiritual director, novice master, friend, companion, confessor, confidant, and guardian angel, Fr. André Malet, both monks of Désert.

Louis Malet was born at Espalion on November 12, 1862.[83] His father died the following year, leaving a twenty-one-year-old widow and a seven-month-old baby. The widow move to Paris, where she remarried, but the child was entrusted to his father's family for several years. We later find him at Passy, near Paris, as a boarding student, in a school run by a Congregation that originally came from the Aveyron region. At the outbreak of war in 1870, the mother and her eight-year-old son returned to Espalion, but, once peace was restored, it seems that the mother returned to Paris alone.[84] Louis did not have the good fortune of enjoying a warm

81 Marie-Bernard Martelet, *Dom Chautard, abbé de Sept-Fons*, 1982, end of Introduction.

82 Beatified on October 3, 2004.

83 He received the baptismal names Jean, Louis, and Henri, but in practice the name Louis won out.

84 In 1877, she was again widowed at the age of 36. She lived into her 90s and died at the Blagnac guesthouse on February 12, 1932.

familiar environment. In 1873, he was sent to the minor seminary at Rodez, but he was not a particularly good student, nor was he considering the priesthood. However, with the help of Fr. Emmanuel of Aiguebelle, he discovered Trappist life through the ruins of Bonneval, where a group of Trappist nuns came to settle, with Fr. Emmanuel as their chaplain.

On February 20, 1877, Ash Wednesday, he became a young oblate at the Trappist monastery of Sainte-Marie-du-Désert.[85] He became a novice on September 8, not yet fifteen years old, taking the name André. Two years later he committed himself by taking vows. In 1881 he was put in charge of writing the Annals of the community's daily life. His former novice master (beginning in 1878), Dom Candide Albalat y Puigcerver, was elected abbot on October 6, 1881, an event that was decisive for his future. On April 4, 1884, feast of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows, Br. André began his retreat in preparation for solemn profession, writing his reflections in a notebook. One of these reflections, ten pages in length, is entitled "Vive Jésus-Hostie!" This habit of writing down his feelings remained with him throughout his life.

On January 31, 1886, he was ordained priest. His abbot, Dom Candide, chose him as his personal secretary. The abbot thus took him along when he went to Spain to visit the Spanish monks at Divielle, near Madrid, where they had fled as a consequence of the 1880 decrees.[86] It was during a pilgrimage to Avila that he received an especially revelatory light into the unique role of Jesus Christ in the life of the soul. From that moment on, his life was dominated by the centrality of the person of Christ. This encounter with Christ was the origin of poetry, prayers, contemplation, theological reflection of both a spiritual and conceptual kind, and, finally, of enlightening learning experiences: "What he knew through theology, he had already sensed through his affectivity. Avila allowed him to experience this through a grace of conviction that he attributed to the great Carmelite. Henceforth he considered Saint Teresa as his mother in the spirit. Proof of this is found in the important pages he wrote on October 7 and 15, 1886, probably just after returning from Spain."[87] These pages are prayers addressed to "Jesus of Teresa." From then on he always signed his name with a mark that signified "André of Jesus." On June 13, 1890, he wrote a consecration to the Heart of Jesus in the form of a poem.

Shortly after his ordination he began his revision of the 1721 Rituale, comparing it to the 1689 version. He studied the origin and the cause of the changes that

85 The abbey, founded in 1852, was governed by Dom Etienne Salasc, who had the idea of receiving boys, age 12 through 15, and providing them with instruction on the margins of the community. He thus hoped to foster a vocation pool. Dom Etienne was elected abbot of La Grande Trappe on August 6, 1881.

86 Situated at Val-San-José. After moving several times, they finally settled at La Oliva in 1927.

87 Dom M.-Etienne Chenevière, *Toi seul me suffis*, Westmalle, 1970, p. 27–28 (hereafter Chenevière). This section owes much to this book, of which it is a sort of summary.

were introduced in 1721 "in an extremely carefree and negligent way," in order to return, if possible, to the purity of the early Usages.

WRITINGS ON THE CISTERCIAN CHARISM, IN VIEW OF THE UNION OF THE TRAPPISTS

Over several years, attempts had been made to reunite the two Trappist "Observances," represented by the Congregations of Sept-Fons (Old Reform) and Westmalle, which followed Rancé's Regulations, and the Congregation of La Trappe (New Reform), which followed the Rule and the Usages of Cîteaux. Letters and documents circulated among the abbots, and the secretary of Dom Candide saw them in passing. The main question was to know on what basis such a Union would be formed. The New Reform did not want anything to do with Rancé's Regulations, and the others did not want to leave them behind, because the horarium of the Rule seemed to them too difficult for general use.

In the correspondence between the Vicars General of the two Observances, there was talk of "returning to the Tradition as properly understood and wisely interpreted by the Order." To Dom Candide's response to a letter from his Vicar General, Fr. André added his own remarks on this tradition and on the steps that would need to be taken in order to reach the desired union. Interested in these remarks, the Vicar, Dom Eugene of Melleray, asked the author to elaborate on the basic principles of a viable union and to do a study of the Usages currently practiced in the two Observances as compared to the early usages of Cîteaux.

On July 16, 1891, Fr. André completed this 200-page work on "Life at Cîteaux." It was a major collection of historical documents that could possibly be of use in the discussion. However, afraid of complicating the negotiators' task, he did not dare mention his work. He was afraid that some people confused fervor with austerity and equated any lessening of austerity with laxity. And yet, as he wrote, "So many souls attracted to the Cistercian way are discouraged by the austerities of La Trappe! So many Trappists bemoan that they are so little Cistercian! Let us therefore become Cistercian in heart and in deed, having been so long Cistercian in word only! Ad majorem Dei gloriiam."[88]

Dom Eugene, a supporter of Trappist austerity, seems not to have appreciated these conclusions, but Fr. André firmly defended his stance, claiming that it was based on the actual practice of the early Cistercians. He did not budge an inch, and was not afraid to oppose the Vicar General's position. Paradoxically, it was his opinion that Rancé had introduced an austerity that overstepped that of the Rule,

88 Quoted by Chenevière, p. 44.

and that it was to be abandoned, whereas the Vicar General reproached the Observance that followed Rancé's Regulations of doing just the opposite: he thought it insufficiently austere, because it did not keep the fasts as prescribed in the Rule (one meal after None in winter until Lent, and after Vespers in Lent). How were these positions to be conciliated?

Fr. André particularly regretted that Dom Eugene had distributed to the abbots a mere selection (*Exerpta*) of decisions from the medieval period, which he considered an arbitrary choice that could distort the thought of our Fathers.

The General Chapter, convoked by the Pope, met on October 1, 1892 (see § 1.2 above). The unification was voted in by 47 votes against 5, without any clear indication of the basis on which the union would be formed. The drafting of the Constitutions was put off until the following year. It was understood that the basis would be the Rule and Usages of Cîteaux, along with some adaptations for our times, which would need to be defined in the Constitutions.

Fr. André was pleased with the result of the Chapter, but he feared that the new Abbot General, who was the former Vicar of the Rancé Observance, would find it difficult to detach himself from the Rancé spirit…. His fears were unfounded, for Dom Sébastien Wyart was not exactly a staunch defender of Rancé, whose writings he did not much appreciate. With no novices to take care of (he had been appointed novice master in 1892), Fr. Malet continued his correspondence with the Order's authorities.

Drafts of the Constitutions and the Usages were submitted to the monasteries for comment. Fr. André reacted in no uncertain terms with a 22-page memorandum. For him, the draft too closely followed Rancé's Regulations, it was not based on the Rule, it did not modify what was contrary to the Rule, and it added certain practices not found in the Rule. It looked as if the Definitors' draft aimed at encompassing a maximum total of austerities.

It could be that one result of this work was the 1893 General Chapter's appointment of Dom Candide, abbot of Désert, among the definitors in charge of finalizing the Constitutions and preparing a draft of the Usages.

AS NOVICE MASTER—THE WAY OF THE HEART OF JESUS: JOSEPH CASSANT

On February 1, 1893, Fr. André began keeping a notebook in which he wrote his reflections during his monthly first Friday retreats, dedicated to the Sacred Heart. These retreats were devoted to evaluating his duties as novice master. It was his duty to stimulate his own fervor, in order to arouse fervor in the novices. This fervor "establishes the Reign of Jesus in our hearts." In the formation of novices, as seen by the legislation of the period, the novice master was a spiritual director and

a confessor, emphasizing the priestly ministry more than the teaching activity. André's resolution on January 10, 1894, was formulated as follows:

> I considered the need for complete self-denial in my relations with my novices. Indeed, I will only be able to be everything for everyone, following the Apostle's example, if I turn myself over as Jesus did: *tradidit semetipsum*. I am not my own; I belong to Jesus. And it is for Jesus that I must dedicate myself to my novices…

On October 5, 1894, he wrote:

> My work with the novices will be effective in drawing them to Our Lord only to the degree in which I am able to sacrifice myself for them. The sacrifice of dedication will require that I spend myself for them; the sacrifice of patience that I gently put up with their imperfections; the sacrifice of duty that I oppose their faults.

He wondered what might be the mission of the Father Master:

> All fatherhood involves the shedding of blood, but, in contrast with fleshly fatherhood where pleasure is at the origin, spiritual paternity requires a shedding of blood that originates in pain… Pain alone can give love the tenderness and strength that must be part of spiritual fatherhood…. Formation of the heart, continual help, limitless dedication…. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the perfect model of this fatherhood.[89]

Religious life, he wrote, is more complete unity of the soul with God, which requires complete submission of our will to God's will. But Fr. André was also aware that one could not neglect the human makeup of the person one wants to unite to God. The will must have an effect on all the human faculties, in order that they act in accordance with the will. This presupposes knowledge of the way the will works, so there is need for a little psychology. Our faculties must be consecrated to God even in the way they operate: intelligence must seek the truth, i.e. God, our will must cling to what is good, i.e. to God, and our body, in all its movements and actions, must also seek God. When the whole of our being is oriented in this manner, we are in truth, charity, and freedom. Perhaps without realizing it, Fr. André

89 These three texts are cited in Chenevière, pp. 59–61.

echoes the Augustinian thought of our Fathers: our faculties are in the image of God when they are turned to God.

Penance is but the negative condition of this orientation of the soul, which must put aside anything that hinders it. But penance remains subordinate to contemplation, which is precisely this clinging to God. There is no question of seeking penance for its own sake, as was the case among those of a certain ilk, who—mistakenly—claimed to take their inspiration from Abbot Rancé.[90]

On December 5, 1894, a young man barely sixteen entered the community, Br. Joseph Cassant. Fr. André was to guide him on the path of the Heart of Jesus, which is nothing else than the unstinting gift of self to God through full submission to his will. For André, the Sacred Heart meant love for God and for God's law, which is the sacrifice and gift of self. All the asceticism and mysticism of this path are summed up in the phrase: All for Jesus. While the Father Master was elaborating a theological Christology to show the unique role of Christ, and was using dogma as the basis for his motto "He must reign," his disciple was experiencing in love and through the work of the Holy Spirit what the novice master was discovering through theological intuition. In fact, the young Joseph Cassant—who made first vows on January 17, 1897 and solemn vows on May 24, 1900—had no gift for speculative study, and had to endure a great deal during his years of theology, except in 1900–1901, when the teacher was Fr. André, who was able to make the subject matter accessible to his student.

In his teaching, Fr. André was concerned with training, not scholars, but seekers of God. He had perceived the inadequacy of the manuals in use at the time, and dreamed of a theology course designed for the interior life. What mattered was to open up to souls the pathways that lead to the heart of the Trinity.

Political events in 1901 and the following years threatened the community with eviction. In case they were to be separated, the novice master gave his disciple some important pointers, pushing him further along the path of loving abandonment to the Lord, whereas, on the human level, he had a tendency toward scrupulosity.

Br. Joseph wanted to be a priest, in order to be sure that he would have communion every day, no matter what happened. Communion was for him the most beautiful moment of the day. But he needed to pass the preliminary exams in theology, a cause of obsessive fear for him. Nevertheless, all went well, and he could be ordained subdeacon on March 2, 1901, and deacon on February 22, 1902, by the bishop of Montauban. But after his deaconate, it became clear that the

90 As penitential as he was, Rancé was well aware that the essential matter was the clinging of the heart. It was the 1869 Directory that made of penance a characteristic of love, to such an extent that it should be sought for its own sake.

young monk was wasting away, and that an incurable illness was consuming him. It seemed best that he undergo treatment in his home region, and he thus spent two months with this family after his priestly ordination, which he received on October 12, 1902, from Bishop Marre, on a short stay at Sainte-Marie-du-Désert. His time at home did not improve his health as was hoped. His physical condition declined quickly. He moved to the infirmary in early 1903. Death came on June 17, 1903, while Fr. Malet was celebrating Mass for his intention. In less than nine years his novice master and confessor led him to sanctity, on the pathway of love for the Heart of Jesus and abandonment to God.

DOM ANDRÉ AS ABBOT—THE PATH OF THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST, HEAD OF THE CHURCH: *OPORTET ILLUM REGNARE*

In 1892, Fr. André added on to his duties as novice master and secretary the duties of librarian and master of ceremonies. He had been professor for the 1900–1901 school year, and he taught again in 1910–1911. Although still novice master, he also became prior on April 9, 1905. Elected as Titular Prior of the foundation at Val San José in Spain, in July, 1906, he turned it down, because of his lack of knowledge of the language, and especially because he was needed at Désert. Not only did he carry many responsibilities in the community, but he was also the monastery's legal representative, because the abbot was Spanish. The political situation caused many difficulties for the abbey, on account of the intrigues of anti-clericals in their area. Each time elections were held, there was friction with the communal authorities, so much so that, for the sake of peace, the monks had to give up using their voting rights.

In September 1911, Dom Candide, who was seriously ill, could not go to the General Chapter. He sent a letter asking that his resignation be accepted: he no longer felt able to oversee the community he had served as abbot for thirty years. He could not muster the courage to tell the community in person that the General Chapter had accepted his resignation.[91] It was announced to the astonished community in a letter he wrote from Lourdes. The election date was set for October 23. Fr. André was elected on the first round with 10 votes out of 15. The abbatial blessing was bestowed on him by Bishop Marre, Abbot General, who had begun his monastic life at Désert, and who was still abbot of Igny, a daughterhouse of Désert. The date was November 12, the forty-ninth anniversary of his birth and baptism.

He defined his role as abbot with concepts that focused on Christ: the abbot is

91 He first considered withdrawing to San Isidro, but he quickly realized that his presence there might cause problems, and he returned to Désert on October 19.

a vicar of Christ, and is thus a corner-stone of the community, pastor and teacher of his monks. There was no question of seeing the abbot's authority on a merely sociological level, for he is a spiritual father. "The abbot must be a reflective man, a man of prudence and duty, a man of the spiritual life, . . . one who takes advantage of his office for his personal sanctification." But, as vicar of Christ, he refused to compromise regarding the marks of respect owed him according to the Usages of the time,[92] and he would not allow for thoughtless criticism of his decisions, going so far as to inflict the discipline on a brother in chapter for apparently having discredited a measure he had taken.

A graphologist has pointed out that he was a man who dealt with matters from the top down. He was less concerned with forms than with the value of goals being pursued. "Petty actions and narrowness of scope did not suit him. He considered things as they were in their present state as well as within the perspective in which his imagination placed them."[93] But he tended to get overexcited and combative, running the risk of a kind of exclusivism.

His motto as abbot was consonant with his spirituality: *oportet illum regnare*, "He must reign," and he placed the Sacred Heart and the cross of Saint Andrew in his coat of arms. "The interests of the Heart of Jesus in souls," was for him the main concern of the superior and the light in which his duties must be undertaken. On January 1, 1912, he formulated a wish for the community: that the family spirit be increased by seeking Jesus, and, to that end, he decided that the year would be dedicated to the Sacred Heart. During his time as prior, he had had a chance to explain this devotion to the Sacred Heart. Until the end of the sixteenth century, he said, the standard around which the disciples of Jesus gathered was the Cross, but afterwards the Cross lost its force of attraction. In modern times, Jesus wanted to renew this power of the Cross by placing it in his Heart, to show that it is love that had nailed him to the wood, the love of a God who was a Friend, and at the same time a human love, the symbol of which is Christ's heart of flesh. Through devotion to the Sacred Heart we were to allow ourselves to be captivated by the love of Jesus: to be tied with the bonds of love was to become a "captive of Jesus." Since this was the ideal for the Christian, it was not permissible for a monk not to want it. Jesus' reign over us must be absolute, and must extend over our minds, hearts, and senses. Thus we will be able to say with the Apostle: "It is not I who live, but Jesus living in me."

Speaking to the nuns of Maubec on July 14, 1926, he made the following profession of faith, which highlights what might be called his theology of dependence:

92 It was necessary to kneel when speaking to him in his office.

93 Quoted by Chenevière, p. 124.

> The entire science of Cistercian holiness is condensed into these two central ideas: Jesus-King, dominator of my whole being, and, I, dependent on Jesus. The exercise of dependence with regard to the authority of Jesus is the act proper to the virtue of humility. That is why humility is the solid foundation of the monastic virtues.

And on June 20, 1929, to the monks of Bonnecombe, he stated: "Jesus is begging for love, because he loved so much."[94]

Having dedicated the first year of his abbacy to the Sacred Heart, he wanted to comment on the three dogmatic invocations in the litany to the Sacred Heart: Heart of Jesus, Son of the Eternal Father; Heart of Jesus, formed by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the Virgin Mary; Heart of Jesus, substantially united to the Word of God.

By basing his teaching on devotion to the Sacred Heart, Dom Malet did not think he was distancing himself from the Rule of Saint Benedict, because the Patriarch of monks asked them to hold nothing dearer than Christ, and it is out of love for Christ that he demands all to make the costliest renunciations. It is under the authority of the "Lord Christ, true King" (RB Prol.) and in the school of his service that he enrolls the monks. The life of the monk thus becomes, wrote Dom Malet, "a daily feast of Christ the King" (October 28, 1934).

It is the same basis for his theology of absolute obedience, about which the abbot of Désert remained intransigent. Just as the Mystical Body receives its life from Christ, its head, so does the monastic community nourish its religious life through unity with its head, the abbot: "religious life gives shape to our lives to the extent that we enter into contact with authority through our obedience." The authority in question is Christ's authority, which is extended to the superior without ceasing to be Christ's.[95]

At the end of his life he had occasion to read the doctoral thesis defended in Rome in 1934 by a monk of Westmalle, entitled *On the Formation of Christ in Us According to Bl. Guerric of Igny*.[96] He was enthusiastic about this work, and used it as the basis for a dozen chapter talks. The idea that struck him most was that our soul can be called the mother of Christ, because it gives birth to Christ within. In this way he discovered the Cistercian heritage, with which he seems not to have been much acquainted until then. He almost never refers to Saint Bernard. His knowledge of monastic tradition was limited mostly to the Rule.

In 1933 he published his book *The Supernatural Life: Its Elements and Its Ex-*

94 Quoted by Chenevière, p. 136.

95 Talk to the nuns of Blagnac on July 9, 1919, quoted in Chenevière, p. 140.

96 By Fr. Déodat De Wilde, who was later abbot of his community from 1967–1975.

ercise. It is a theological anthropology that unites dogma and practice. The life of grace presupposes nature, which it animates, and which one must therefore know well in order to direct oneself well and allow the life of grace to blossom in us. Included here is care of the body, which is a form of mortification, because it is not a matter of flattering the body but of regulating it. This was a rather novel assertion in an Order known at the time for its austerity. Using the format of 239 questions and answers, the book covers Dom Malet's teaching to novices, which he continued in his daily chapter talks as abbot. Unfortunately, though, he delivered these talks in a weak, monotone voice that did not convey the abbot's interior enthusiasm and that did not hold his listeners' attention.

For him, the first task of the abbot is not—as it was for his predecessor, as he admitted at the time of his resignation[97]—to impose meticulous observance of the Usages; rather, it is to foster an interior dynamism of love and a blossoming of the supernatural life. Mere exterior respect for rules is not enough. What is needed is fidelity motivated by love. In this sense, faithfulness to regular discipline can be considered a form of sanctity, because it recognizes in the rule a manifestation of God's will for us at the present moment, and helps us carry it out with, through, and in Jesus.[98] But the abbot has to take into account the state of health of each person. He did not hesitate to take measures that went contrary to the Usages if he though them necessary: he introduced coffee and milk at breakfast, dispensed from singing at certain offices, or from going barefoot on Good Friday, and even from the recitation of the Good Friday Psalter. On some solemnities, the menu was spiced up to include omelets!

IN SERVICE OF THE ORDER—THE RULE AS THE MONASTIC PATH TO THE HEART OF THE REIGN OF CHRIST, AND THE LITURGY AS AN EXERCISE OF THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST

On the occasion of the eighth centenary of Saint Bernard's entrance at Cîteaux, Dom Norbert Sauvage, abbot of Scourmont, proposed to the Abbot General, Bishop Marre, that the General Chapter be preceded by a congress or a retreat for the superiors. He was urged on by his novice master, Fr. Anselme Le Bail, whom he also made prior in April 1913. The idea was accepted, and Dom Norbert was put in charge of organizing it. He appealed to Dom Vital Lehodey and Dom André Malet to help out. A Dominican from Toulouse was to give the retreat talks

97 Dom Candide, writing on October 29, 1911, was pleased to say that he had never changed an iota of the regular observance during his thirty years as abbot, and, he added: "as for the sanctification of souls, which must be the second concern of the abbot…." Dom Malet reversed the order of priorities. See Chenevière, p. 146.

98 See his words to the nuns of Bonneval and Blagnac, in Chenevière, p. 159.

on a theme dear to the heart of the Abbot of Désert and which Malet had in fact suggested: the Reign of Christ in souls. Then certain abbots were invited to speak about what they considered to be the most effective means for helping the interior life flourish in communities. In addition to the three abbot organizers (although Dom Norbert read what his prior had written), nine others also spoke, among them Dom Chautard, Dom Emmanuel Fléché, prior of Viaceli, Dom Herman Smets, and Dom Pierre Wacker, these last two being former definitors.

Dom André must have been happy to hear Anselme Le Bail's reports, which were in complete agreement with his thought on the community as the Body of Christ linked to its head, of whom the abbot is a representative, and also on the Christological aspect of the spirituality of the Rule. In his own talk, he expanded on Le Bail's paper by showing how the abbot was to speak of Jesus when explaining the Rule. In an earlier talk he had expounded on the principles of the supernatural life: there we find the first sketch of the book he would publish twenty years later, but that he had already been teaching for ten years.

There was a follow-up to this 1913 retreat in the sense that several abbots expressed a wish in 1919 that the General Chapter devote some time each year to ways of fostering the supernatural life in our monasteries. The 1920 Chapter listed eight practical means for attaining this end. The request was repeated at the Chapter the following year, and it was decided that each superior would send a memo to the Procurator, who would then present a summary at the 1922 Chapter. The Procurator was none other than Dom Norbert Sauvage, elected to that position at the end of the 1913 Chapter. The report he presented to the capitulants in 1922 was printed, along with an introductory letter by Dom Vital Lehodey. No doubt Dom André had sent his own suggestions to the Procurator. Several of the ideas correspond with his, especially on obedience.

THE LITURGY

The 1899 General Chapter assigned Dom Candide, abbot of Désert, to have a few of his monks draw up a first draft of a new Ceremonial. A first attempt—mostly the work of Fr. Robert Trilhe who was then a monk of Désert—was examined by a commission in 1904, but was found wanting: it was more a study on the Ceremonial than an actual Ceremonial. A second draft was approved in principle in 1906, although it still needed to be examined by Dom Candide, Fr. André of Désert, and Fr. Bernard of Igny. Once revised, it was printed in 1908 and given a trial run in 1909. But it proved difficult to harmonize the Ritual, the Missal, the Usages, and the Ceremonial. Moreover, certain monks questioned the legitimacy of our liturgical practices, so much so that there was need for consultation with the Holy

See. A decree of the Congregation for Rites, dated March 8, 1913, recognized the legitimacy of our practices, and requested that the 1689 Ritual be used as the basis for harmonizing our various liturgical books. This task was assigned to a commission of which Dom André, now abbot of Désert, was a member. He was also asked to harmonize the Usages with the Ceremonial. He wrote a first report, published by Westmalle in 1913, in which he responded to the various remarks sent in by the monasteries.

The War of 1914–1918 slowed down the work of the liturgy commission. Meanwhile, a new Code of Canon Law was issued in 1917. In 1922, the commission appointed for correcting our liturgical books included Dom André, Dom Herman Smets, abbot of Westmalle, and Dom Fabien, definitor and secretary to Bishop Marre. The preceding year Dom André had published a fifty-page booklet edited by the Order's printing office at Westmalle. It was entitled "Cistercian Liturgy: Its Origins, Constitution, Transformation, and Restoration." It was a vigorous defense of the positions held by the members of the various commissions appointed to finalize the liturgical books. The Holy See approved the Rubrics of the Missal in 1924.

Dom André's aim was to return to the liturgy and the liturgical practices of the twelfth century. But he was unable to carry it through. The preparation of the Ceremonial was soon to be taken out of his hands, partly for reasons of illness. In 1934, the preparation of the *Manuale Caeremoniarum* was assigned to Dom Alexis Press, abbot of Tamié.

Many abbots consulted Dom André in private concerning various rubrics or points in the Usages, and he always responded in great detail. Everyone considered him an "expert." Obviously the contemporary outlook is not the same as it was in those days. At that time, the main thing was to avoid any kind of "Romanization" of our liturgy and to try to return to medieval customs. Dom André naturally endorsed the efforts of his friend, Dom Alexis Presse, without, however, adopting his manner (see § 3.2.3). In our day, such efforts seem too much like liturgical archeology, and current work tends to focus on spiritual understanding of liturgical actions. But Dom André did show interest in the early Liturgical Movement, as can be seen in his summaries of articles by Dom Lambert Baudouin.

THE FINAL YEARS

For Dom Malet, April 29, 1927 was the beginning of a period of major jubilees. His fiftieth anniversary of entrance into the novitiate was celebrated with two bishops, seven abbots, and other ecclesiastical dignitaries and distinguished laypersons, among them the Consul of Spain. A hundred places were set in the refectory. It is

interesting to note that two years later the jubilee of his profession was celebrated on September 8, 1929, with no invited guests from outside. A few weeks later, on October 31, Archbishop Saliège, bishop of Toulouse since February 1928, made his first visit to the monastery.

Dom André saw to the exhumation of the remains of Fr. Cassant on June 23, 1931, finding a full skeleton in the midst of fragments of clothing. Out of spiritual modesty he had always been discreet about his former disciple, with whom he had had strong bonds of friendship and even affection. It must be admitted that Dom Candide was inflexible: for him, a monk should not get himself talked about, even after his death. Once he became abbot, Dom André published an account of Fr. Joseph's last days in *The Sacred Heart Messenger*. Persons from outside appealed to the little monk of Désert and received favors, but the abbot did not speak of these things in chapter. Nevertheless, in 1926, a brochure was published, presenting two exemplary young monks of the abbey, Fr. Joseph Cassant (1878–1903) and Fr. Ange (1895–1920), with the title *Two Flowers from Désert*. According to the preface, the account of Fr. Joseph had been sitting in the archives since 1903. He especially was the object of popular veneration, so much so that the 1931 reprint of the brochure spoke only of this one desert flower.

The abbot's health began to deteriorate in 1932, when he was seventy. He had to resign himself to not attending the General Chapter that year, nor the 1933 Chapter. He nevertheless improved enough to attend the Chapters of 1934 and 1935. At this last Chapter he obtained permission to begin the diocesan investigation in view of the beatification of Fr. Cassant. On April 22 of the previous year, an unexplained healing had taken place: a child of ten and a half was dying of an ear infection with symptoms of meningitis. The anguished father had gone to the abbey to pray at the grave of Fr. Cassant, and at that same hour the child came out of the coma and was healed. This event brought Dom André out of his silence. The following year, on May 30, another "miracle" occurred through the intercession of Fr. Cassant. This time it was for nine-year-old Jean Delibes, suffering from severe meningitis, the outcome of which, according to the doctors, would be a quick death. This miracle was used in the cause for beatification, which took place on October 3, 2004. Other healings had already taken place, and still more would follow.

The year 1936 was a highpoint in Dom Malet's life. April 29, feast of Saint Robert, marked both his sixtieth anniversary of monastic life, his fiftieth of priesthood, and his twenty-fifth as abbot. The first congratulations he received came from the Carmel of Lisieux: Mother Agnes of Jesus pointed out to him that April 29 that year was the thirteenth anniversary of the beatification of her sister, Thérèse. On hand were Bishop Saliège, several bishops, abbots, and religious superiors, as well

as numerous priests, laypersons, dignitaries, and friends. Four days earlier Dom Malet had handed in to the Archdiocesan office at Toulouse the request for opening the beatification investigation for Fr. Cassant, which was in fact opened the following May 2. He acknowledged that he had never ceased invoking Fr. Cassant daily from the time of his death, especially every time he had to speak to the community.

But he was more and more weighed down with fatigue. It was a hot summer, and the Revolution in Spain caused him much anguish for his daughter houses in that country. On September 11 he made known his wish to receive the anointing of the sick and the Viaticum in church. He also gave his testament to his sons: "Love Jesus present and alive in whatever the Divine Will has in store for us." The following day was the opening of the General Chapter at Cîteaux: the Abbot General sent his blessing and the assurance of the capitulants' prayers. He had a series of heart attacks. On September 21, the community gathered to pray the prayers for the dying. He was saddened to hear the news of the dispersion of the Viaceli community. On October 13 he could hear the procession chants as the relics of Fr. Cassant were being brought to the infirmary. On October 24, just following his twenty-fifth anniversary as abbot, he received the announcement of the conclusion of the first stage in the investigation for the cause of Fr. Cassant. Having received that welcome news, toward one o'clock in the afternoon, he passed away suddenly and quietly. It was a Saturday, eve of Christ the King, the establishing of whose reign in souls was Father Abbot's only ambition. According to his wishes, he was buried, not in the burial chamber of the abbots but at the foot of Fr. Cassant's first grave. It was later on, in 1961, that his remains were placed in the crypt of the same infirmary chapel where, in 2006, the relics of Fr. Cassant would be placed for veneration.

(*See next page for a summary table of Dom Malet's writings*)

THE WORKS OF DOM MALET
(not including his personal notebooks and chapter talks)

Date	Subject	Form
1886	Etude comparative des rituels de 1721 et 1689	Unpublished
July 14, 1891	Etudes sur les observances du premier Cîteaux	Sent to the Vicar General
July 16, 1891	*La vie à Cîteaux* (A 200-page study)	Unpublished
After October 1892	Studies on the Cistercian observances	Sent to Dom Wyart
1893	Remarks on the draft of the Usages. (22-pp. memo)	Sent to Dom Wyart
Beginning in 1908	Officially involved in the revision of the Ceremonial	
June 1912	Account of Fr. Cassant's last days	*Messager du Cœur de Jésus*
1913	Talks given at the 1913 superiors' retreat	Westmalle, 1914
March 7, 1913	Report on the comments about the *Manuale caeremoniarum*	Westmalle, 1913
1921	Cistercian solutions to various points in the Rubrics and Usages	Westmalle, 1921
May 1921	*La Liturgie cistercienne. Ses origines, sa constitution, sa transformation, sa restauration*	Westmalle, 1921
June 1933	*La vie surnaturelle. Ses éléments, son exercice*	Salvator-Casterman, 1933 New expanded edition, 1934

In 1926, *Deux fleurs du Désert* was published anonymously. The chapter on the last days of Fr. Cassant includes passages that had appeared in *Le Messager du Cœur de Jésus*. It is likely that Dom Malet either oversaw or wrote this first spiritual biography of Fr. Cassant.

2.4.4. Dom Norbert Sauvage (1876–1923)

("The Art of Preparing One's Successor," an article that appeared in French in *Colletanea* 63 [2001]: 213–223, signed by Armand Veilleux, published here in English with the addition of a few biographical points.)[99]

When Dom Godefoid Douillon, second abbot of Scourmont, died in 1901, the community elected Dom Norbert Sauvage, age twenty-five, as his successor. Scourmont was then a fairly large community, so there was no lack of candidates among the older and more experienced monks. If they elected Fr. Norbert, it was not because he demonstrated particular talents as an administrator or because he was a brilliant intellectual; it was simply because he was a deeply spiritual man and the embodiment of goodness.

MONK OF SCOURMONT

Léon-Parfait Sauvage entered Scourmont at eighteen years of age in 1894, after having spent a few years in the minor seminary at Cambrai in France.[100] He wanted to be a lay brother, but was received into the choir, where he remained in spite of his oft-repeated wish to be a lay brother.[101] Even before entering, he had received the grace of an intense prayer life and a deep love for Jesus. At the monastery he showed much goodness to everyone. Dom Godefroid Bouillon, who had a keen knowledge of human nature, perceived in him early on a gift of God for the community.

On the day of his simple profession he was appointed sub-master of novices, and ten months later became the infirmarian, an important position in the community. He showed the qualities of a monk able to combine an intense prayer life with great dedication to his brothers. A short time later Dom Godefroid placed him on his Council.

He had not been infirmarian for long when, in October 1901, he had the sur-

99 Dom Armand Veilleux has been abbot of Scourmont since 1999, after having served as abbot at Mistassini (Canada) from 1969–1976, and at Conyers (USA), from 1984–1990, and as the Order's Procurator from 1990–1998.

100 He was born on July 3, 1876 in the North of France at Avesnes-le-Sec. He lost his mother before reaching the age of 11, at which age he made his first communion. Beginning when he was fourteen, he wanted to become a priest, but at age seventeen he began to look at Trappist life, and was already living a rather austere way of life.

101 He took the habit on September 17, 1894, taking the name Br. Norbert; he made simple profession on October 4, 1896, and solemn profession on October 29, 1899.

prise of finding the sub-prior, who was also novice master, dead in bed. A few days later, young Fr. Norbert was appointed sub-prior and Father Master.[102]

Struck with an illness that would quickly carry him off, Dom Godefroid predicted to Fr. Nobert that the community would elect him abbot, and he advised him to accept. Dom Godefroid died on December 18, 1901. His prediction came true on January 15, 1902, when the community elected Fr. Norbert as its third abbot. He begged to be spared this responsibility, rightfully pleading that he was too young and inexperienced. He explained that, by electing him so young, they risked having him as abbot for a long time, thus preventing much more capable persons from acceding to this office. The community would hear none of it. He then proposed that he be appointed temporary superior. Nothing doing; he had to accept.[103]

ABBOT OF SCOURMONT (1902–1913)

His eleven and a half years as abbot were of utmost importance for Scourmont and, it might be said, for the Order. First of all, he devoted himself mainly to being an apostle of the interior life and to teaching intimacy with Jesus to his monks. He was entrusted with some important assignments within of the Order, especially regarding Tilburg in 1909. But, since he was aware that his young age and lack of expertise in many areas were inherent shortcomings,[104] he worked hard at forming a successor. As soon as he had one ready, he stepped down from office. Among the many fine recruits he received into the novitiate were Anselme Le Bail, who entered in 1904, and Godefroid Bélorgey, who entered in 1910.

After being elected abbot, he had to appoint a novice master, since that had been his task up until then. He chose Fr. Alphonse Bernigaud, who held that position until 1907. In no way prepared for that responsibility, Fr. Alphonse worked by trial and error for a time, seeking a method other than Rodriguez's manual,

102 He had been ordained subdeacon on December 31, 1899, deacon on May 23, 1900, and priest on October 3, 1900.

103 Given his age, it was a postulation. He was granted the dispensation on February 11, 1902 and was blessed on April 7.

104 But he had a strong spirit of faith. As he said later on: "I could be no more than a mediocre abbot, but I think I was, at least, always supernatural, never self-seeking, and always trying to edify and motivate. My first concern was the best interest of the house, and I wanted above all to foster the interior life. I did not have any major trials, although I had to suffer at times. But I was often badly humiliated because of my many inabilities breaking in on all sides. I placed my trust in Jesus, Mary, and St. Joseph, the patron of the house. On Fridays I said a Mass to the Sacred Heart, on Saturdays one in honor of Our Lady, and on Wednesdays one in honor of St. Joseph, asking that they help me in administering the community. They helped me a great deal, and often prevented me from making serious errors, as I realized later on. I never did anything important without first praying to the Sacred Heart, to Our Lady, and to St. Joseph. I owe them a great deal, because it is a miracle that, with such a young, unskilled and ungifted superior, the community made rather a lot of progress on all fronts."

used in most novitiates at the time. Having taught a number of cycles on devotions and various themes, in 1905 he came up with the idea—which was novel at that time—of using the Rule of Benedict as a formation manual. Since he did not know the Rule too well, he had his novices write papers on the Rule. One of those novices was young Br. Anselme Le Bail, who had been attracted to the Rule from the start of his novitiate, and who worked on his paper with great enthusiasm. He filled a thick notebook, which he finished on May 10, 1906. Already at that time, Br. Anselme was in possession of a vast synthesis of the Rule of Benedict, a synthesis he elaborated on throughout his life as a monk and an abbot.

Just as Dom Godefroid had quickly perceived the spiritual qualities of Br. Norbert, so too did Dom Norbert perceive the qualities of Br. Anselme early on. He soon gave him major responsibilities. In 1909, he appointed him novice director for the lay brothers. Br. Anselme gave them a full course on the liturgy, and wrote a little treatise entitled "The Divine Office of the Cistercian Lay Brother," presenting the Pater and Aves office as "prayer of the Church." The following year Br. Anselme became novice master for the choir monks, a novitiate that included Br. Godefroid Bélorgey.

In 1909, the year Br. Anselme was appointed novice master, the Holy See published an important document on the clerical studies. Dom Norbert, whose own formation had been under the system of a single professor for all subjects, obeyed the Holy See's demands without hesitation, and appointed Fr. Joseph Canivez (a good theologian, even though he is mostly known as a canonist) to organize the studies.

Eager to win over hearts for Jesus, not only in his community but also in the Order as a whole, Dom Norbert proposed to the Abbot General a kind of congress to be held at the time of the 1913 General Chapter. That Chapter coincided with the eighth centenary of Saint Bernard's entrance at Cîteaux. The purpose of the congress would be to take several days to examine "possible means for increasing the knowledge and love of Jesus in our houses." Contrary to all expectations, the plan was accepted, and it was decided that this congress would be held just before the General Chapter. Dom Norbert was put in charge of organizing it. This event, which gave the capitulants a chance to appreciate Dom Norbert's abilities, influenced the way things evolved later on.[105]

Since the time of his election at Scourmont, even though he fulfilled his abbatial service quite well, Dom Norbert had maintained his intention to turn the

105 Having left for Belgium at the age of 18, he had not fulfilled his military service in France. Therefore, in order to avoid trouble with the law, he could not return to France before reaching the age of thirty. That is why he only began attending General Chapters in 1906.

office over to another as soon as possible. As we read in his own reflections on this subject:

> I was determined to do everything in my ability to give up my place as soon as someone with the necessary qualities came along, no matter what kind of humiliation it might cause me. Later on I heard it said that one is always ready to resign when one is young, but that it becomes unthinkable when one is older. This frightened me, and I wanted to protect myself against such a danger. I came up with the idea of binding myself with a vow on pain of mortal sin. Having reflected about it for several years, one Good Friday, while at prayer, I vowed on pain of mortal sin that I would give my resignation immediately, without objection, and without asking for any explanation the day an authority of the Order—General Chapter, Abbot General, or Father Immediate—asked told me it would be good for me or the community that I resign. But, in order to make it easier for them to say so freely, I committed myself by this same vow to inform the Abbot General and the Father Immediate about these dispositions as soon as possible during the Regular Visitation or at the General Chapter. A few months later I told them, and I even told it to the community at chapter.[106]

These lines are too clear to require any comments. Their sincerity became apparent a few years later. Dom Norbert continued putting all his energy into serving his community as abbot, and the community was thriving. It never occurred to anyone to suggest that he resign. But, in 1913, he came to the conclusion that, for himself and before God, the time had come for him to do so. This was no snap decision, nor was it easy. Here is what he wrote about the matter:

> I have never had any illusions about myself. Jesus has always seen to it that I have enough good sense to see that I was not in my place as Abbot of St. Joseph (Scourmont). I had an excellent Prior and Fr. Master, who was much more capable than I, and who would have been able to do much good in the monastery. In August 1913, I believed that the time had come for me to do all I could to turn my place over to him. It was not easy, but I wanted to do what I considered to be the will of Jesus. After long prayer and reflection, I thought it was God's will that I go and announce to the Abbot General that it would be to the community's advantage for me to be replaced at St. Joseph, and that I was therefore ready to cooperate with any arrangement

106 This quotation and the quotations that follow are taken from the archives of the Abbey of Scourmont.

> aimed at doing the best thing for my Abbey. It was a serious step, because I was leaving myself open, not only to being a resigned abbot of Chimay, … but also to the possibility that the Abbot General would take advantage of my availability to make use of me for another Abbey, where the situation might be much more difficult and disagreeable. I had nothing to gain by such a change, just the opposite. Nonetheless, I believed I needed to move ahead, abandoning myself to the wisdom and love of Jesus, who wanted me to do so. Jesus was asking me to make a greater act of faith, trust, and abandonment than I had ever made before. I wanted to give him this token of love and trust, and so I went to Laval, where the Abbot General was. On my way, in Paris, I spend two hours before the Blessed Sacrament at Montmartre, declaring to Jesus with tears that I would do anything for love of him, that I wanted only what he wanted, and that the serious step I was taking was a matter between him and me. The Most Rev. Fr. General saw no need to attach any importance to my initiative, and answered that replacing me at the Abbey of Forges was out of the question. Nevertheless, I had taken the step; it was done, and I could expect anything.

At the next General Chapter, they were looking for a Procurator General to see to the Order's business with the Holy See. The Abbot General, aware of Dom Norbert's dispositions, suggested the Fr. Abbot of Scourmont. After an initial moment of surprise, the suggestion was accepted. On October 4, 1913, Dom Anselme Le Bail was elected abbot of Scourmont, and a new and no less important stage than the previous one was about to begin for Dom Norbert Sauvage.[107]

ROME: PROCURATOR GENERAL AND SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR (1913–1923)

During the ten years he spent in Rome as Procurator General, that is, until his death in 1923, Dom Norbert, in addition to the various dealings with the Holy See that the Procurator's job involves, provided any number of services for the Order. He had an undoubtedly positive influence on the students who lived at the Generalate, as he noticed himself: "During my first year in Rome, I noticed that several of our students had mistaken notions about their vocation and about the spirit of our Order.… The study of works of Saint Bernard and the decisions of the General Chapter can help one see more clearly."[108] Each summer, when offices

107 In spite of his willingness and his inner resolution, it was not without sadness and suffering that he left the abbatial office of his cherished community.

108 Among the students of 1913–1914 was Fr. Colomban Tewes, future abbot of Achel, who later wrote: "Dom Norbert immediately stood out for his marvelous monastic spirit and his love of the contemplative life, including

were closed in the Eternal City, he preached retreats in monasteries of the Order. He returned to Rome in September after the General Chapter, which was always held at Cîteaux.

He was much sought-after as a spiritual director, and did a great deal of spiritual teaching in various communities in and around Rome. Two communities in particular benefited from his attention, and thus began an extraordinary network of relationships. The communities in question were Grottaferrata, which later transferred to Vitorchiano, and the Little Sisters of the Assumption in Via Bixio in Rome.

a) Grottaferrata

The beginnings of the Grottaferrata community were rather atypical, as was the case of many foundations in this period. Around 1870, Julia Astoin, daughter of a senator in Lyon, entered the abbey of Vaise, near Lyon, as a novice. Since she did not have sufficiently good health to make profession, she became an oblate. She owned property in Italy, near Turin, and she persuaded the Vaise community to allow her to make a foundation there. With six companions (two choir professed, two lay sisters, and two novices), Julia, the superior of the group, founded the community of San Vito. Since she had not made vows, she owned the monastery and administered it freely. In the end, she did pronounce vows, becoming Mother Teresa, and was canonically installed as superior of the community. Having never made a novitiate, she proved to be a difficult superior. Nonetheless, many from the rural areas of Piedmont and Lombardy entered the community.

When most of the sisters who had come from Vaise returned there, the Cistercian character of the San Vito community was quickly lost, and, 1886, eleven years after the opening of the foundation, the archbishop of Turin withdrew permission to receive postulants and accept professions. These sanctions were lifted by the new archbishop in 1892. Nevertheless, Mother Teresa had further difficulties with the Father Immediate, Dom Ignazio, abbot of Catacombs (now Frattocchie). The 1898 General Chapter ordered the community's dissolution before finally giving in to the request of thirty-one sisters who wanted to continue living in submission and obedience. It was decided that the community would move to Grottaferrata,

its sacrifices and mortifications as practiced in our Order. During Holy Week of 1914, he preached the annual retreat to the students…. One could sense his enthusiasm for the magnificent ideal he was pursuing. There is no need to hide it: that retreat was, thanks to him, a decisive moment in my life. Full of fervor, he proposed Christ as our ideal, just as Saint Benedict would have done for his monks…. On an excursion to Subiaco…[with] the students…he spoke passionate words to us in the grotto." Fr. Alexis Presse, who completed his three years of study in Rome in June 1913, obtaining a doctorate in Canon Law, stayed on at the Generalate as master of students for the year 1913–1914.

near Rome, where Catacombs owned a plot of land. It had formerly been a center of Orthodox spirituality and Greek culture, where a monastery had been founded in 1004 by Saint Nil. Mother Teresa stayed behind at San Vito with two oblates, and it was there that she died.

When Dom Norbert arrived in Rome as Procurator General, he immediately began to look after this community, dedicating himself to its spiritual formation. He went there as confessor, and substituted for the Father Immediate, who was mobilized during the First World War. Every Saturday afternoon and on the eve of feasts, he went to Grottaferrata, staying on through the following day, preaching, hearing confessions, and giving conferences. He wanted to give the sisters a solid formation in spirituality, Scripture, and the sources of Cistercian spirituality. He also gave courses to the novices, which the whole community attended. He collaborated closely with the abbess, Mother Agnes, a holy and very intelligent woman, who was among the sisters who had come from San Vito.

b) Mother Pia (Maria Elena Gullini)

At the same time, Dom Norbert helped out at the community of Little Sisters of the Assumption. One day, a rather unusual candidate presented herself at the convent. Her name was Maria Elena Gullini. Her father was a brilliant engineer, who had developed Italy's railroad system, and had become a government Minister. Maria Elena, born in 1892, had received her first communion in Venice at the hands of the Patriarch, Sarto, the future Pius X. She was an intelligent and extremely elegant young woman, who had done her schooling with the French Sacred Heart Sisters in Venice. She had left school well supplied with degrees in languages, music and painting, and she had come to Rome to be with her father.

When in 1916, at age twenty-five, she wanted to join the Little Sisters of the Assumption in Rome, the Mother General wondered if such an attractive person with so many qualities could adapt to their simple life of care for the poor. She therefore advised her to make a discernment retreat under the direction of Dom Norbert Sauvage, who was the community's confessor.

Dom Norbert obtained permission for Maria Elena to make an in-house retreat with the Grottaferrata community. At the end of this retreat he told her he thought she had an authentic vocation of self-giving in love, but that he thought she could fulfill that vocation in the contemplative life just as well as in the active life. He invited her to become a Cistercian.

She entered six months later (on June 28, 1917), not at Grottaferrata, but at Laval, in France. Dom Norbert had discerned that a person cast in such a mold and possessing such human and spiritual qualities would be invaluable for

Grottaferrata, but that she should first receive a solid formation. That is why, with the agreement of Abbess Agnes, he directed her toward Laval, where she took the name Sr. Pia.

Dom Norbert had much esteem for the abbess of Laval, Mother Lutgarde Hémery, who for over forty years (1900–1944) led a thriving community that numbered nearly 115 members, and where the life was very austere. Unknown to Sr. Pia, the superiors had made an agreement that she would be formed at Laval, but *for* Grottaferrata. At Laval, just as at Grottaferrata, the exuberance of this lively young woman inspired a bit of fear at first. But she was admitted to profession on July 16, 1919. In order to give her some pastoral experience, she was soon appointed as mistress of the professed lay sisters.

Ten years after her entry at Laval, she returned to Grottaferrata, where she took stability the following year. From then on, Mother Agnes counted on her a great deal. A few years later she was appointed abbess by the Holy See, and then elected unanimously by the community three years later.

c) Mother Tecla (Maria Fontana)

About the time Maria-Elena Gullini was being sent to Laval, another novice, Maria Fontana, entered at Grottaferrata. She was a woman of mature age, around forty-five, who had been the Assistant General of the Franciscan Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Mary. Before presenting herself as a novice at Grottaferrata, she had spent twenty-five years caring for poor people of all religions in the streets of Cairo, Egypt. During her novitiate she had Dom Norbert Sauvage for spiritual direction. When she was turned down for profession (officially because she had a weak voice, but it was probably because they did not know how to integrate into the community a person with that kind of experience), Dom Norbert sent her to Chimay, where she was accepted and made profession on September 8, 1921, taking the name Sr. Tecla. During her seventeen years at Chimay, she had Dom Anselme Le Bail and Dom Godefroid Bélorgey as chaplains.No sooner was Mother Pia appointed abbess at Grottaferrata—on December 30, 1931—than she called Sr. Tecla back from Chimay to help her as novice director. From that point on, the community of Grottaferrata was for a long time in the hands of two exceptional women: Mother Pia as abbess,[109] and Sr. Tecla as novice director. They

109 Her time as abbess was not without moments of weariness, darkness, and trials, even from her own Order. On two occasions she had to resign. The first time, in December 1940, she was replaced by Mother Tecla, who appointed her novice director. Reelected in 1946 and 1949, she once again had to resign in 1951, and was sent in exile to La Fille-Dieu in Switzerland. Once again, Mother Tecla replaced her for two years. Mother Pia was called back in 1959, which cleared her name, but she died of cancer on the return trip on April 29.

were the abbess and novice director of the Blessed Gabriella Sagheddu, who arrived at Grottaferrata in 1935. It is quite striking to see this extraordinary network of relationships, in which Dom Norbert played an active part, and through which Divine Providence prepared the way for a future Blessed.

These few lines on Norbert Sauvage's role in the vocations of Mother Pia and Mother Tecla give us a glimpse of a large part of his ministry in the Order during the last stage of his monastic life. He was a great spiritual director. He stayed in touch with Mother Pia until the end of his life. While she was at Laval he visited each year when he went to France for the General Chapter. He maintained regular correspondence with her and with several other women he had oriented toward monastic life. The depth of discernment, the solidity of spiritual teaching, and the refinement of sentiment that come through in these letters bear witness to his great emotional and spiritual balance.

d) Sister Marie-Joseph (Anne-Marie Granger)

One of these persons was a young woman from Guéret, Anne-Marie Granger, who sought his help in discerning her vocation, while he was stationed nearby at the beginning of the war.[110] At the end of this discernment he told her:

> If I were a young woman of twenty, and if I were Miss Anne-Marie, I would enter Trappist life tomorrow at Laval…. I am aware of an abbess who would scratch my eyes out if she knew I was sending you to Laval, because at Laval there is no lack of vocations. But I am speaking in the interest of your soul, not in the Order's interest…. Pray and ask for the graces you need to make your choice according to God's will.

This young woman entered Laval in 1915, where she took the name Sr. Marie-Joseph, and was one of the founders of Igny in 1929.[111] Sr. Marie-Joseph wrote the following about Dom Norbert in her memoirs:

110 Although he did not do military service, Dom Norbert did present himself at the French Embassy to be mobilized in 1914. He was sent to the military depot at Condé, and then to Rouen and Reims. But he fell seriously ill, and was hospitalized at Saint-Maur-des-Fossés in Val-de-Marne, until February 21, 1915. He convalesced first at Champigny, then at Guéret, and finally at Maubec. He was demobilized in March 1915 for reasons of bad health, and returned to Rome in June.

111 It was the abbess of Igny, Mother Alphonse Gastineau, who put Mother Pia, then abbess of Grottaferrata, in contact with a friend of the Dominican Fr. Christophe Dumont, director of the Istina Center for ecumenical studies at Paris. It was Fr. Dumont who introduced her to Fr. Couturier. That is how the monastery of Grottaferrata was included in the list of 1500 addresses to which the 1937 Christian Unity Week brochure was sent, a publication on which Mother Pia commented to her community, and which prompted Sr. Gabriella to offer her life for the cause of Christian unity.

> I entered Laval on October 2, 1915. Dom Norbert kept in touch with me until his death, and took part in all my joys. In June 1917, he sent us Mother Pia from Rome, and she is now prioress of Grotta. He came to the abbey in person after the war, and preached at Sr. Pia's simple profession on July 16, 1919, taking as his text "Who is this coming up from the desert, leaning upon her Beloved?" During his vacation each year he spent a few days in the chaplain's house at La Coudre, thus becoming once again for both of us Fr. Norbert, "poor little abbot without an abbey and without any authority." In October 1921, he gave us our annual retreat.[112]

These few lines should suffice to show how interesting it would be to have a complete biography of this exceptional monk. One can hardly begin to list the lessons to be drawn from his relatively short but full life. Let us nevertheless note three aspects: the abbot, the spiritual director, and the preacher.

Dom Norbert had a strong sense of community. He saw his role as abbot in terms of service to the community. This service was first of all a matter of fostering love for Christ, of leading the monks of his community to a deep life of prayer, and of developing each monk's spiritual and intellectual qualities. For him, this service was completely subordinate to the community, so much so that he considered it normal to hand everything over to another when the right moment came, and even to prepare someone to replace him as soon and as well as possible. This concept of abbatial office corresponds with that of the key centuries of monasticism, when some abbots remained in office for many years or even until death, but when it was not rare for abbots to resign after a few years in office when it seemed, for one reason or another, in the best interest of the community to make a change. The idea that the abbatial office is by its very nature "for life" surfaced at the time of the restoration of monasticism in Europe, within the context of nostalgia for monarchy.

Dom Norbert's sense of responsibility as abbot for the members of his community could also be seen in the way he dealt with persons who asked him to help guide them in seeking God's will. In more than one case, this responsibility

112 This retreat attracted a great deal of attention. The complete text of these twenty sermons has been preserved in the archives at Scourmont. It is enough to mention the titles of each to give an idea of the rich content of his teaching at a time when preaching tended to be rather moralizing. 1) The need to study Christ to know him, love him, live in intimacy with him, and to allow him to live in us. 2) The five dispositions that produce knowledge of God in us: admiration, adoration, respect, submission, and trust. 3) The divinity of Jesus Christ. 4) The motherhood of God. 5) The mystery of Jesus Crucified. 6) The characteristics of the Savior in Jesus. 7) Mary, co-redemptrix of humanity. 8) Jesus, the divine friend. 9) Jesus, the divine Spouse. 10) The Eucharist. 11) Our membership in the Body of Christ according to St. Paul, part one. 12) Part two of the same. 13) Our life in God, our sanctification. 14) Mortification. 15) Means for working at our sanctification. 16) The motherhood of Mary. 17) Jesus' humility. 18) Jesus' charity. 19) Communion. 20) Conclusion: the life of prayer.

transformed itself into true friendship, characterized by a deep sense of gospel demands, but also by great humanity, and even tenderness. For example, he wrote the following to Sr. Marie-Joseph of Laval (Anne-Marie Granger):

> I would like you to get used to the idea that I am your spiritual father, the father of your soul, and that in that capacity I must above all seek the good of your soul, even more than the joy of your heart. Jesus has given me to you, to reveal him to your soul and to win over your heart for him more and more; to make him delight in you and you in him. This is a beautiful, honorable, and even pleasant mission, but I can never forget its supernatural character. I must therefore seek whatever will make you delight more in Jesus and whatever will make him delight more completely in you. If sacrifices are required to that end, Jesus knows that I am his and for him, even to the point of sacrifice. Moreover, if, in order to make him delight more in you and you in him, it were necessary to mortify your nature and that most sensitive part of your nature—i.e., your heart— I hope I would be sufficiently supernatural to do so out of love for Jesus and for love of your soul.

Preaching retreats in monasteries of the Order had become for Dom Norbert not only a service for God and for the communities, but also a way of exercising spiritual fatherhood. He invested himself ardently in them, especially during the war and the years immediately following it. The last year of his life he preached four retreats, one after the other, without taking into account that he had a bad cold that was probably more like bronchitis. The overwork and the effort were a stress on his heart. He died on July 8, 1923, following a brief sickness, and his body was laid to rest in the cemetery of Tre Fontane.

After having exercised spiritual fatherhood in his community of Scourmont, he went on to exercise it in the Order and well beyond the Order through the ministry of spiritual direction. And he exercised a true spiritual fatherhood of a new kind for many communities in the Order through the ministry of preaching retreats, in which he stirred up love for Christ and an attraction for the inner life.

Dom Norbert Sauvage is one of those humble people whose lives leave a deep impression on the lives of many others.

2.5. THE FIRST WORLD WAR (1914–1918)

The International Context

There was a great deal of international tension in Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century, especially on account of German and Slavic rivalries in the Balkan Peninsula, which was freeing itself from Turkish domination. Another source of tension was the arms race between the Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy) and the Triple Entente (France, Great Britain, and Russia). At the opening of the 1911 General Chapter, Bishop Marre stated that "one need not be a clever observer to notice that society is going through a crisis, the outcome of which cannot be far away." In fact, though, he was mostly alluding to attacks against the Church and not to the international situation. But destinies are linked, as Leo XIII remarked in 1900: "The destiny of nations is not all that different from the destiny of individuals: they too rush toward perdition if they stray from the "path," the Son of God, who is the creator and redeemer of humankind, the sovereign of the entire earth, who has power over all persons, whether considered individually or collectively as societies."

The spark that ignited the gunpowder was the June 28, 1914 assassination at Sarajevo of the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne by a Bosnian student. Austria declared war on Serbia at the end of July 1914. Within a few days the interplay of alliances pulled nearly all of Europe into the war.[113] On August 2, Germany declared war on France.

In violation of Belgian neutrality, the Germans invaded France via Belgium. They thought their blitzkrieg would be a success, and, in fact, during the summer of 1914, the French, Belgian, and British armies pulled back. The Germans were only a few kilometers away from Paris. They were stopped by the Battle of the Marne in September 1914. A stable 750 km front formed between the North Sea and Switzerland. But the Departments of northeastern France, where the steel and coalmines are concentrated, were occupied, which was a hard blow to the French economy.

Things were unsettled throughout 1915. In the west, the armies dug into their trenches, and their attacks, though bloody, canceled each other out. In April, at Ypres (Belgium), the Germans for the first time used chemical warfare: the eyes

113 Joining the Triple Entente were Belgium and Serbia (soon to be attacked), along with Japan, forming the "Allies." Italy remained neutral at first before changing over to the Allies. Other nations would soon do the same.

and lungs of unprotected soldiers were burnt with chlorine gas. There were no victors in the campaigns on the eastern front (Russia) and in the Balkans.

The year 1916 is especially known for the Battle of Verdun, from February through December. The Germans were trying to wear down the French army: artillery numbering 1250 guns were in action along a 20 km front, and certain areas received 10,000 shells per hour. On the average, 3000 men died each day. Some battles were fought hand to hand. Between February and June the Germans advanced all of 5 kilometers. Then from October through December, the Allies regained the lost ground. It was necessary to organize a continuous flow of relief troops to make up for losses. There was constant stream of convoys along the "sacred way" linking Verdun and the rear lines. Nearly all French soldiers took part at one time or another at the battle of Verdun. At the beginning of 1917, French and British commanders-in-chief wanted to pierce the front in order to win the war, but the tremendous defeat of "Chemin des Dames" entailed a serious crisis for the war effort and the country: what was the use of headquarters ordering such butchery for the sake of prestige? Whole units refused to go to the front. Clemenceau was called on to lead the government.

The Czarist Empire in Russia went through a serious economic and political crisis in 1917. Disorganized, in ruins, and cut off from its western suppliers, it was paralyzed by widespread strikes. In February, in the capital at Saint Petersburg, the army joined the workers in a strike, forcing the Czar to abdicate in March. A provisional government was established, but the Bolsheviks caused continual unrest, bringing down the government in October. Trotsky, a militant Bolshevik, was elected president of the soviet. Lenin, secretly returning from exile, imposed a cessation of hostilities. The negotiations led first to an armistice, which was reached in December 1917, and then to the Brest-Litovsk treaty in February 1918, which led to civil war between the "reds" and "whites."

The Germans were able to take 700,000 men from the eastern front, in order to strike back at France before the American troops arrived to help. The United States, incited by German submarine attacks against their convoys, had in fact decided to enter the war. The German offensive began in Picardy on March 21, 1918, the feast of Saint Benedict. The German advance, in spite of allied resistance, seemed to have clinched the war (it was at that time that Mont-des-Cats fell victim to artillery fire, and the monks of Igny had to evacuate their monastery). But the arrival of the Americans and the establishment of a single command under Foch made it possible to redress the situation. The Germans had to pull back (and it was during their retreat that they blew up the monastery of Igny on August 3). They quickly moved toward the armistice of November 11, 1918, and armistice soon followed on the Balkan and Near-Eastern fronts. The various peace treaties were

negotiated with difficulty: including the Versailles treaty on June 28, 1919, and the treaties of Riga (1921) and Lausanne (1923) after the Polish-Soviet War (1920) and Greco-Turkish War (1921–1922).

The war was over, but it left its mark. It was an unprecedented historic catastrophe. The human losses were enormous. Some ten million soldiers and civilians died, most of them men between twenty-five and forty years of age, causing serious population imbalances. It took years for Europe to recover. The economy was in ruins. Four great empires were defeated, and some of them broken up, giving rise to a number of independent states. Moreover, the war indirectly created the two dictatorial systems—Communism and Nazism—that twenty years later caused so much harm and so many casualties both in Europe and throughout the world, when they provoked the Second World War. Bolshevik communism had come to power by taking advantage of the Russian Empire's economic collapse. As for Hitler's national socialism, he succeeded in dominating the country by capitalizing on the resentments generated by defeat and by the constraints placed on the vanquished country. One tenth of pre-war German territory was taken away, the German army had to be reduced, and, especially, an enormous financial settlement was imposed (132 billion gold marks), undermining the country's social and economic recovery.

The Trappists in the War

In July 1914, the French government was considering a reapplication of sectarian policies against the Congregations, thus threatening some communities of the Order with closure. But the declaration of war on August 2 had the immediate effect of removing all danger. That same day, the minister Malvy suspended all the measures stemming from the laws of 1901 and 1904.

But general mobilization unsettled the monks' communities in belligerent countries: the young monks had to take up arms. Thus began a period of trial. Several mobilized monks were placed with medical units or assigned as chaplains, the rest as combatants. Some tried to maintain a certain interior discipline. Dom Le Bail, abbot of Scourmont, who was mobilized with an ambulance unit, wrote to his father:

> For me, the obligation to leave the cloister has not been without its good fruits. Being called up and changed from monk to soldier has made me humbler and more abandoned to God's will. I was very attached to monastic quiet, I had a certain taste for my responsibility as abbot, I dreamed of implementing my plans and projects for a good monastery.… Now I am

> learning to be more abandoned to God's will…. The war does have this advantage for us monks: it forces us to practice the essentials of our life in an environment other than our own…. It is the interior life that continues in the trenches or in the hospitals…. Moreover, all these monks have quite an apostolate.[114]

He kept in close touch with the mobilized members of his community and continued supporting and forming them by means of a journal he published regularly under the title *Le moine soldat*. Other abbots also looked after their monks who had been called up, as did Dom Chautard, who visited them four times, using his title as officer and chaplain or putting on a Red Cross armband to go all the way to the front lines. At the request of Cardinal Sevin, archbishop of Lyon, Chautard wrote a monthly letter for the *The Priest in the Armed Forces*, a periodical created at his suggestion. He took up themes from *The Soul of the Apostolate*, applying them to this new perspective. Nevertheless, the monk soldiers lived in difficult conditions. In his May 23, 1918 circular letter, Bishop Marre recommended them to the prayers of the womens' communities: "Our mobilized religious courageously withstand the fate that has befallen them, but with innumerable sacrifices and privations, especially for those who find themselves thrown into the fire. Our prayers will help them safeguard the ideal and the flame of their vocation in the midst of all kinds of danger."

One of these soldier monks has left us several notes and letters that were gathered up after his death, forming a beautiful testimonial about what some of the mobilized monks experienced. The young monk in question, Br. Maxime Carlier of Scourmont,[115] made simple profession on December 8, 1913, and, under the wise direction of Dom Le Bail, had passed from a fear-based spirituality to a more trusting and loving attitude, learning especially from Saint Gertrude. When he was called up, he went almost immediately to the front. The German invaders had the upper hand, and during the retreat of the Allied troops, Br. Maxime realized they were passing over Scourmont's property. Wounded twice and awarded the Military Cross, he was a strong, well-balanced person, as his correspondence shows. His friendship had a beneficial impact on fellow soldiers who had drifted from the faith, leading them from contempt to respect, and even to conversion. He drew strength from his total faith in God's presence even in the midst of bullets or shells exploding nearby. For him, the orders of officers was God's will. Once,

114 D. Dufrasne, *Un moine, un Abbé, une communauté*: *Dom Anselme Le Bail*, Cahiers scourmontois I, 1999, p. 89.

115 See J. Duculot, *Une Ame contemplative*, Gembloux, 1920; Octave Daumont, *Life of Michel Carlier*, trans. A Monk of New Melleray (New York: P. J. Kennedy & Sons, 1927); Eugene Boylan, *A Mystic under Arms* (Cork: Mercier, 1945). See also what Thomas Merton wrote on this topic in chapter 11 of *The Waters of Siloe*.

during a night watch to prevent the enemy from approaching, he was stretched out on the ground when the Germans opened fire from their trenches. The bullets whistled and struck just inches from his head, leaving a wake of flames where they hit the ground. But he was not afraid; he remained motionless, thinking of those who were praying for him, and invoking the Lord: "Lord, come to my help." But his fortune was not always so good. On September 14, 1917, just as he was about to go on leave, there was a bombing, and one of the first shells landed on the shelter he was in. He was killed on the spot. Indeed he foresaw this fatal outcome—was there ever a soldier who hadn't?—and had freely offered his life as a sacrifice and as a fulfillment of his Cistercian vocation in union with the Lord Jesus:

> I see with great clarity that my past life in the monastery and my life at present are both equally the wish of Providence, and that a soldier can glorify God just as well as a monk, because the goal to reach for everywhere is union with Jesus, the mediator and restorer, submissive to his father, holding fast to his concerns alone.

Statistics on the monks enrolled in the allied armies were published in April 1919. They need to be filled out with whatever data may be available in the archives of German and Austrian communities. Thirty-one communities had 386 of their members in the war, of whom 348 were in the French army. Fifty-nine of them were killed, mostly in the field of honor. There were 131 mentions in dispatches, and 80 Military Crosses, one medal of the Legion of Honor, 5 military medals and 14 others were bestowed. Of the 142 mobilized priests, 20 served as chaplains.

The war years were hard on many members of the clergy, and monks also had their share of unfortunate consequences, several of them finding it difficult to resume monastic life. Echoing Benedict XV's regrets, Bishop Marre pointed out to the General Chapter in May-June 1920 that, once again, there had been too many secularisations, exclaustrations or dispensations from vows for the period 1913–1920.

As for the communities, having all of a sudden lost their younger members, it was not easy to live through these war years of penury and disorganization. But the communities were also involved in serving their countries. Several provided shelter for medical units or field hospitals, as at Cîteaux, Mont-des-Cats, and Igny, where chocolate-making was stopped, not only because the workers were called up, but also in order to provide space for the army's medical corps. Bishop Marre's circular letter of January 18, 1916, encouraged monasteries to look after disabled soldiers, to teach them occupations adapted to their situation, to help re-educate

them for farm work, or to teach the blind (a consequence of gas poisoning) a trade to practice upon their return to civilian life.

Some communities in the war's path suffered more than others. Several had to leave the monastery for a time. In 1914, during the invasion of Belgium, Westmalle had to take refuge in Dutch monasteries, and the Belgian army corps of engineers, in view of defending Antwerp, blew up their bell tower, damaging the church. A part of the Achel community, along with its abbot, went to Diepenveen and Tegelen. At Oelenberg and Altbronn, the communities had to leave their monasteries for two or three months.

Other communities were threatened in 1918. Dom Chautard, who then acted as Father Immediate for Belval, evacuated the community to Gardes in April, where they stayed until October; only five sisters stayed on at Belval during that time. Eleven brothers left Saint-Sixtus to go to Sept-Fons. Mont-des-Cats had been spared in 1914,[116] when, during an assault on the abbey, the nephew of the German Emporer, young Prince Maximilien of Hesse, died in arms of the abbot. But it was caught in a German offensive in April 1918. Beginning on April 15, shells began to fall on the monastery. The community took refuge near the Belgian border at Watou, but, on April 17, fourteen older monks, led by the prior, set out for La Grande Trappe, where they stayed until the death of the abbot of Mont-des-Cats on March 1, 1919. They then returned for the election of his successor, in spite of the destruction at the abbey. In fact, after intense combat from April though September, the abbey was in ruins. Of the church, which had been inaugurated just twenty years earlier, there remained only the walls. The cloisters, chapter, entrance gate, and brewery were destroyed. Beginning on September 6, the monks moved back into the parts that were still standing. The refectory became the chapel, and a dormitory was set up in the cheese cellars (!). Reconstruction was completed in 1926, in a simpler style than the 1898 buildings.

Igny (as was mentioned in the section on Bishop Marre, § 2.3.2.) was dynamited on August 3, 1918, during the German retreat. The six remaining monks had left the grounds on May 28, returning to their motherhouse, Désert. But the community was too elderly and too small to set up again at Igny. It was only reluctantly that they settled at Cîteaux, in what they thought were provisional quarters. Igny was rebuilt between 1926 and 1929, but for the nuns who came there from Laval.

Latroun, in Palestine, suffered damage to its buildings, as did Oelenberg, whose 1906 church was demolished and had to be rebuilt. It was consecrated in 1927. But Oelenberg experienced worse suffering on account of the defeat of Germany. The

116 General Foch, future General and Marshal, had his headquarters just a few kilometers from Mont-des-Cats from October 1914 to June 1915. He came to the abbey often to ask the prayers of the monks. He also corresponded with the abbot.

German members of the community, who were the majority, had to leave Alsace now that it had become French again. The abbot, Dom Pierre Wacker, the only German allowed to stay, opened a refuge for his monks at Banz in Bavaria, which the 1921 General Chapter turned into a foundation. But the place, chosen too quickly at the end of the war, presented practical problems, so in 1925, the community moved to the ancient monastery of Engelszell, on the banks of the Danube in Austria.

In Bosnia, the community of Mariastern numbered 123 Germans and only 8 Slavs. The abbot, Dom Dominique Assfalg, had acquired the abbey of Himmerode—in addition to a refuge house in the Tyrol and a foundation at Zemoniko in Dalmatia. Eight German monks from Mariastern, instead of returning to their monastery, had gone directly to Himmerode. Their situation was confusing, because they did not have permission from their abbot (Dom Bonaventure Diamant, who succeeded Dom Assfalg) or from the Holy See, to whom they requested a transfer to the Common Observance. The 1921 General Chapter was tempted by the idea of repopulating this ancient monastery founded by Saint Bernard, but the eight rebels would have to move out. In the end it could not be arranged, and the monastery was sold to the Common Observance.

SECTION TWO: TAKING ROOT (1922–1939)

CHAPTER THREE

Taking Root in the Tradition

3.1. THE ABBOTS GENERAL BETWEEN THE TWO WARS

3.1.1. Dom Ollitrault de Kéryvallan (1862–1929), Abbot General 1922–1929

The General Chapter of 1922 that accepted the resignation of Bishop Marre scheduled the election of his successor for the following November 13. It was the abbot of Melleray, Dom Jean-Baptiste Ollitrault who was elected to the office of Abbot General.

He was born April 13, 1862 at Quintin, a small town in Britanny, in a family soon to be struck by a series of deaths. When the father died of cholera in 1867, five of his children were already dead. Jean-Baptist and his sister were then confided to the care of their grandparents. At public school and then the minor seminary where he was sent, he showed a precocious intelligence and all his efforts were crowned with success. Feeling himself drawn to the religious life from the age of six, he entered the major seminary of Saint-Brieuc run by the Marist Fathers. But his health was poor. He had to interrupt his philosophy studies because of repeated illnesses that obliged him to rest. After a time of teaching in a Marist high school, he was sent to the novitiate of Paignton in Devon, England, at the end of 1884. However, after five or six months he felt another interior call toward the monastic life, which his novice master and provincial felt was authentic.

Thus he presented himself on June 1, 1885, at Melleray, where the abbot was Dom Eugène Vachette, Vicar General of what was then called the Congregation of La Trappe. He began his novitiate on June 14. Several months later, Dom Eugène made him his secretary, which shows the esteem he had for him. He made his simple vows on his feast day, June 24, 1887 and this same day received minor orders. Three months later he became sub-deacon. The following year, on March

17, he was ordained deacon and became a priest on November 18. He was allowed to make his solemn profession on July 2, 1890. Immediately his abbot named him sub-prior and novice master. He was only 28.

SUPERIOR AT WOOD-BARTON

Like many other communities after the Law of 1901, which made everyone fear a possible expulsion from France, Melleray was seeking to prepare a place where the monks could take refuge. Dom Eugène set his heart on England and went there to look around with his sub-prior. A property of 150 hectares (380.50 acres) was acquired at Wood-Barton, in the diocese of Plymouth. It had been completely abandoned and was without any suitable housing. The abbot sent eleven monks there with Fr. Jean-Baptiste as their superior. The first contingent of four monks left Melleray on March 19, 1902, and met up with a huge storm. After a layover at the novitiate of Paignton, well known to Fr. Jean-Baptiste, the monks took possession of their new home. They had to construct a monastery capable of receiving, if necessary, the entire community of Melleray. The first stone was laid on December 10, 1902. The complex was blessed by the bishop of the diocese on August 30, 1905. Fr. Jean-Baptiste's older sister was a religious of the Sisters of Saint Thomas of Villanova, and became the superior of the community established in the county seat of the district where the Trappists had settled! Needless to say, the sisters found assistance and support, both material and spiritual, from them. Fr. Jean-Baptiste even served as their chaplain

The small community earned its living through farming and breeding, mostly of sheep. But their efforts did not pay off right away, and the first months were very trying. However, the monks quickly transformed the operation into a model farm that won the best prizes at the local agricultural shows.

Toward the end of November 1918, when France was rejoicing in victory and dressing its wounds, Fr. Jean-Baptiste's health gave way. Experiencing serious abdominal pain, he was taken to the hospital, but the surgeon was not hopeful. He thought the patient had only a few weeks to live. Nevertheless, Fr. Jean-Baptiste underwent several operations. One evening the situation appeared desperate: his legs had been paralyzed for a week and were becoming cold, and he breathed with difficulty. Two monks said the prayers for the dying at his bedside. The head nurse was preparing the body for the funeral but could not find the stockings. Very alert, Fr. Jean-Baptiste whispered: "the stockings are over there!" Miraculously, the next day, December 8 at 2:00 a.m., at the end of a novena being said for him by his community and others, there was visible improvement, and Fr. Jean-Baptiste gained flexibility in his legs little by little. He continued to improve. He thanked

the Blessed Virgin, but asked her to cure him slowly so that people would not think it was a miracle. His prayer was heard because it took 105 days, more than three months in bed. He had time to count the flies on the ceiling! But the Order still needed him and heaven knew it.

ABBOT OF MELLERAY

At Melleray, the health of the abbot had been poor for several years. It must be said that he was 88 and had "borne the abbatial yoke" for nearly 44 years. He finally gave up his soul to God on April 25, 1919, amidst the affection of his monks. It was necessary to find a replacement, and it was the superior of Wood-Barton that the electors chose on August 5, 1919. Dom Jean-Baptiste was blessed on October 28, and took part in the General Chapter for the first time in May 1920. It was at this Chapter that the abbots refused to accept the resignation of Bishop Marre. The one who would succeed him was still quite new to the venerable assembly. God's hour was not yet at hand.

The political situation in France after the First World War was no longer dangerous for religious. Most of the refuge houses established beyond its borders were gradually closed beginning in 1920. Thus, Dom Ollitrault decided to close Wood-Barton. He also had to consolidate the foundation of Divielle (Landes). This monastery was founded to receive the Spanish monks of Saint Suzanne who first found refuge at Melleray after the State suppression of 1837. These Spaniards had profited from the French expulsions of 1880 to return to their country, leaving behind a small community to carry on at Divielle.

Dom Jean-Baptiste was soon appreciated by his peers. At each General Chapter a Vicar General was appointed to care for the Order in case the Abbot General was impeded or died. Dom Eugène Vachette had been regularly elected each time since 1893. After his death, the abbot of La Grande Trappe was elected to this post at the Chapter of 1920, but, aging and ill, he resigned at the beginning of the 1922 Chapter. Dom Ollitrault, for whom this was the third General Chapter, was elected to replace him. And then, at the end of the Chapter, Bishop Marre gave him his letter of resignation, so that he would read it to the assembly! Thus it fell to the Abbot of Melleray to preside over the chapter of election of Bishop Marre's successor on the following November 13. Guessing that his title of Vicar would obtain many votes for him, but feeling tired after his health problems of 1918, and because he had already been a superior for twenty years, and did not feel capable of exercising this charge, he obtained an audience with the Holy Father, thinking he could find support to refuse election with pontifical approval. But Pius XI did

not agree with him and Dom Jean-Baptiste was forced to accept what he called his sad election, due to a "distraction of the Holy Spirit".

ABBOT GENERAL

From the beginning his health problems reappeared. After a brief time in Rome, in December 1922, where he had tried in vain to bring Bishop Marre,[1] he returned to Melleray for the election of his successor, on January 22. He visited several houses in the West and then took the road for Cîteaux, the South of France, and Italy. But at the end of February, he was detained in Maguzzano by a mysterious foot wound. He had been suffering from it for several days, when on February 22, 1923, on rising he discovered a lot of inflammation and a large scratch on the outer side of his foot. The doctor ordered complete rest with his leg extended. All the same, he continued the Regular Visitation seated on his bed. His foot improved but was not yet healed at the end of the Visitation; he returned to Rome with his foot stretched out on a bench. It is clear that his foot continued to annoy him, because he was again immobilized at Melleray in February 1928,[2] and two months before his death he had to be hospitalized again at the Bizet Clinic in Paris, where he received ultra-violet radiation treatments for his foot.

In 1927 there was a more serious alarm.[3] In April he developed a large cyst in his throat, which was suffocating him. They began by applying enormous compresses taken from boiling water three times a day. "You can guess the faces I'm making," he wrote, "it's a preparation for purgatory!" Finally, at the beginning of May, it was necessary to lance the cyst at the Bizet Clinic. But his vocal cords, near the scar, became congested and paralyzed. He had to wait long months to find the normal use of his voice, which, obviously, would hinder his ministry, especially as President of the General Chapter in September 1927.[4] His conferences had to be read for him. In October he wrote that he was going from doctor to doctor, and they were still applying compresses from boiling water. His voice was improving,

1 Marre gave him some advice in December 1923: that he follow the diet a doctor had prescribed for his intestinal problems, that he not trust the cooking at the Generalate (!), and that he not hesitate to use a carriage, as he, Bishop Marre, had done, for his trips around the Eternal City—Tre Fontane could provide a horse and driver. He must have been aware of Dom Jean-Baptiste's habits, seeking never his ease but instead things that would mortify him.

2 He wrote on February 20: "This is the twelfth day that I am on my back, apart from the little, almost daily, trip that I take to our Doctor at Joué sur Esdre to receive half-hour electrical applications which seem to be very helpful."

3 Henri Charrier is mistaken when he speaks of the end of 1925, beginning of 1926 in his panegyric on Dom Ollitrault (Westmalle 1930, p. 42). This author, in his various notices regarding our Abbots General, is not always trustworthy regarding dates.

4 This Chapter was marked by the death of Bishop Marre several days before it opened.

but he had to use it sparingly, and, as usual, he did not spare himself. Already the General Chapter of 1925 had given him a formal order to take three weeks of absolute rest as soon as possible, and to follow a prescribed diet. At the beginning of the 1928 Chapter he complained that one vocal cord was still paralyzed. The doctors recommended that he not speak in public.

In spite of everything, these problems did not keep him from the visits he had planned, even if some of them were postponed. Scarcely was his foot healed, at the beginning of May 1923, when he went to Belgium and then down to Melleray for the abbatial blessing of his successor on June 10, stopping at Mont-des-Cats and Belval on the way. He was accompanied by Dom Fabien Dütter who was continuing in his role as secretary of the Definitory, which he began under Bishop Marre in 1908. While he continued his visits in western France, he heard about the premature death of the Procurator, Dom Norbert Sauvage, on July 8, 1923. Dom Norbert was only forty-seven years old. Dom Fabien returned to the Generalate, leaving the Abbot General to continue his visits alone. The General Chapter of 1923 named as Procurator Dom Robert Lescand, auxiliary abbot of Cîteaux for twenty-five years, who immediately resigned from his office at Cîteaux. Dom Jean-Baptiste, who was the abbot of Cîteaux, chose as auxiliary abbot Dom Fabien Dütter, who, in 1925 would receive the title of Abbot of Verger.[5] He chose to do without a personal secretary, which added to his workload and . . . to the merits of his correspondents, because he often wrote too quickly, with careless handwriting, which made some of his letters quite jumbled[6].

SEVERAL IMPORTANT EVENTS

Transfer of the monastery at Catacombs

The foundation of the Catacombs community was discussed in an earlier chapter on Dom Wyart. After difficult beginnings, agreements were made with the Holy See that allowed the monks to profit more from being guardians of the catacombs. Thus, with additional income from the chocolate factory, the community was able to provide not only for its own needs but also for those of the nuns at Grottaferrata. In 1912, the Vatican was thinking of entrusting the care of the catacombs to

5 [The title "Abbé du Verger" made him simultaneously titular abbot of Verger Abbey—a.k.a. known as Baumgarten, a monastery founded in the twelfth-century in Alsace, Dütter's homeland—and literally "abbot of the orchard."—Ed.] He received the abbatial blessing during the General Chapter on September 14. In the toast that he made during the meal, Dom Ollitrault spoke with a great deal of humor, which was also one of Dom Fabien's characteristics.

6 He was aware of this problem. When he was bedridden at Melleray in February of 1928, he dictated a letter and had it signed: "Br. Marie Jean-Baptiste, who owes it to his foot to see his name written so well for once!"

someone else, while continuing to rent the property to the Trappists. The monks' situation became precarious, and the General Chapter of that year thought it best to make the first move and consider leaving the property. But the situation seems to have stabilized, and it was only after the war that the question came up again: the lease and the treaty with the Commission of Sacred Archeology expired in November 1922. In spite of the difficulties created almost continually by the Vatican Commission of Archeology, the lease was renewed for 29 years. However, in 1927, it was arbitrarily broken by the Administration of the Goods of the Holy See, with no possibility for appeal. The Order questioned the validity of this decision and criticized the reasons given for it. The General Chapter that year authorized the community to seek a new place to settle. The Holy See gave it two years to find a new home. In 1929, a site was chosen at Frattocchie, even though the location of the property did not satisfy the wishes of the Abbot General, the General Chapter, or the Definitory. But it was the only convenient location the community could find before the expiration date imposed by the Holy See.

Congo

At the end of the nineteenth century, Leopold II, King of Belgium, wanted the Trappists to make a foundation in the Congo, and turned to the abbot of Westmalle, Dom Benedictus Wuyts. Dom Benedictus refused several times under the pretext of a lack of monks to take on the project. His Majesty then went directly to Leo XIII, who agreed with him, and even had a large sum of money sent by the Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith. There was nothing more to do but obey, and the 1893 General Chapter approved the foundation, which took the name of Our Lady of Saint Joseph. The following year on March 17, Dom Wyart made the superior an abbot. This first abbot moved the foundation to Bamania, but soon died at the age of forty-eight, on February 1, 1899, and was replaced by superiors who relaxed the too strict observance imposed by the founding superior. As early as 1900, the question of evangelization of the surrounding population and the education of children came up. They did not take the trouble to construct a regular abbey, and because there were no Regular Visitations, the monks were left to themselves. A mission post was established ten hours by canoe from Bamania. Under pressure from the government and the Apostolic Visitor, a second establishment was founded in 1901 in Coquilhatville, nine kilometers from Bamania. The monks got trapped by the circumstances. They made their foundation at the edge of a region that was 660 × 250 kms, in which there was no Catholic priest.

How could they not give in to the pressure for an apostolate?[7] In the end, they were entrusted with the pastoral care of the entire area. In view of recruiting candidates for the Congo, a formation house was created in 1904 at Charneux (Val-Sainte-Marie), Tilburg's foundation. In reality, though, it only functioned in this capacity for a few weeks.[8] A further attempt at encouraging missionary vocations among young people was a magazine, *Het Missiewerk*, published from 1904 to 1914.[9]

The Holy See followed the situation closely and brought to the attention of the Abbot General, and through him, of the General Chapter, the anomalies in the life of the monks. It was not to take them away from the monastic life and the observance of the Constitutions that they were sent to the Congo. Bishop Marre, visiting Westmalle, carried out the necessary measures, which the General Chapter endorsed. A small central monastery would be built where everyone would occasionally spend time, and the number of mission posts was limited to three. Was this not a sort of "have your cake and eat it too" situation? How would these measures be applied in the Congo? A new superior was named in 1907, Fr. Gregory Kaptein, who wanted to restore monastic discipline, but he did not succeed and was little loved by the others. In 1920, there was a serious falling out between him and one monk in particular, who behaved in a hateful way toward him and ended up by leaving, which qualified as an apostasy. As for the superior, he could not return to his post after the Chapter that year, which he attended. He had to wait at Leopoldville. Dom Herman Smets, abbot of Westmalle, who had lost respect in the Congo because he supported Fr. Gregory, asked Dom Le Bail in 1921 to go there to make a serious Regular Visitation, the first since the foundation. Le Bail spent several months there.[10] He returned persuaded that the mission work, which had become extensive,[11] was unavoidable. He suggested making the best of it, even though the life there was no longer strictly Cistercian. It was in this vein that he ended the Visitation, asking for the resignation of Fr. Gregory, and suggesting several measures that would safeguard the Cistercian character of a missionary way of life. Nevertheless, the 1922 Chapter went in the other direction, and opted for a purely Cistercian way of life: all the monks were to gather in a

7 It was known that Dom Wyart had a missionary spirit, and would have wanted our monasteries to develop a certain apostolate. He praised Mariannhill and Bamania.

8 First seen as a possible refuge for a French monastery, this foundation had been offered to Westmalle in February 1904, as a novitiate for Bamania, but for an unknown reason, the abbot called all its occupants to Westmalle the following April 8.

9 Fr. Herman Smets, future Abbot General, was for a time editor-in-chief.

10 The canonical visitation lasted from May 31, 1921, to January 4, 1922: seven months, to which must be added two months of travel to the Upper Congo and back. While there, the Visitor traveled more than 2,000 kms by canoe or caravan to visit all the posts.

11 It numbered five residences at that time, each with a superior. A total of 199 catechists in as many residences assisted the 14 Trappist priests and 10 brothers, in the service of 23,000 Christians and 10,000 catechumens.

single monastery, which would follow the traditional monastic observance, with only a few dispensations due to the heat; as for the Mission, it would be turned over to the Missionaries of Issoudun, except for a parish and a school close to the monastery.[12] But it was too late, and had become impossible. The discontented monks wanted to leave the Order. Rome asked for an Apostolic Visitation, made in 1924 by the Abbot of Tilburg. The Holy See did not wait for the conclusions of the Visitation, and granted secularization to the monks. Six lay brothers, who did not want to leave the Order, returned to Westmalle.[13] This was the virtual end of the Cistercian community, sanctioned by a decree of the Congregation for Religious on March 23, 1926.

The Constitutions of the Nuns

Until this time the nuns followed the Constitutions of 1883. But when the Code of Canon Law appeared in 1917, it was hoped that this occasion could be used to obtain exemption for the nuns, which had been lost since the decree of October 3, 1834. The Order exercised only a "*cura spiritualis*" over the nuns. But negotiations with the canonist of the Congregation who was supposed to examine the Constitutions, Fr. Vermeersch, did not leave much room for hope. At most this canonist suggested that a distinction be made between "dominative power" of the Order (for discipline and monastic observance), and the "jurisdiction" of bishops. In order to reduce recourse to bishops as much as possible, the powers of the Fathers Immediate were reinforced to the extent that they became veritable superiors, with the risk of unduly limiting the autonomy of the nuns' communities.

The draft of the Constitutions provided that the nuns could pronounce solemn vows. The Holy See would accept them for the monasteries that desired it, but then the nuns would be under papal enclosure. Where the vows remained simple, the enclosure would be "common law under the supervision of the bishops." The Constitutions were approved on June 22, 1926.

12 In encouraging Dom Anselme Le Bail to accept the mission that the abbot of Westmalle wanted to give him, Bishop Marre reminded him that "King Leopold had not asked us to found a mission, but to create a Trappist monastery. Instead of that, our religious founded a mission and from that time on we have swerved off course. We now have a work for which we have not been called or made." The 1922 General Chapter had these words in mind when it went against Dom Le Bail's conclusions, and yet he was the only one who knew the situation personally.

13 Dom Gregory had returned in 1921, after his resignation. But he accompanied the abbot Tilburg on his 1924 visitation.

Revision of the Monks' Book of Usages

After the approval of the corrections to the rubrics in the Missal, in conformity with the 1913 rescript, were approved in 1924, and the approval of the monks' Constitutions on January 26, 1925, it was time to consider revising the book of Usages. The decision to do so was made by the 1924 Chapter, and the work was entrusted to the Definitory. It was published in 1926. Dom Vital Lehodey was also invited to put the Spiritual Directory into conformity with the Code.

Prayers for the Far East

The initiative of a crusade of prayers for the conversion of China and the Far East came from Dom Maur Veychard, abbot of O.L. of Consolation,[14] in 1914. Addressing the bishops of China, he hoped that their support and recommendations would bring in enough gifts that a Mass, at which three brothers would take communion, could be celebrated each day for the conversion of China in a chapel built to this end.

His successor, Dom Louis Brun, elected on February 16, 1921, who had been a missionary in China before becoming a monk, wanted to develop this initiative and transform it into a kind of crusade of Masses and prayers for the conversion of pagans in the Far East. Obviously, he needed to stir interest in the West. He asked for the support of the General Chapter, which approved his project in 1921. He went even further, and obtained an audience with Pius XI on April 5, 1923, at which he easily succeeded in winning over the Sovereign Pontiff, who made himself the first crusader, promising to celebrate Mass for this intention the fifteenth of each month. Pius XI granted a plenary indulgence to whomever would pray for this intention for twenty minutes before the exposed Blessed Sacrament. Those who joined the cause promised to celebrate one Mass a year or to receive communion twelve times a year for this intention.

In accord with Dom Brun's wish, the General Chapter accepted that the center for this cause would be at Cîteaux. The General Director would be the Abbot General, but with a deputy and a promoter in each nation. The group of promoters would form a special commission. Dom Dominique Nogues, abbot of Timadeuc, accepted to be the deputy of the Abbot General, and actively engaged the monas-

14 Having come to China in 1891, Dom Maur was prior when Abbot Bernard Favre died on July 5, 1900, some weeks before the attack on the monastery that the Boxers were planning for August 15 (but which, miraculously, did not happen). He remained in charge during the interim and was elected abbot on July 2, 1904. He remained abbot until his death on April 30, 1919.

teries in this cause. He gave an account at each General Chapter up to the Second World War. From 1923 on, the Holy See showed its support of the cause by raising it to the status of a *Pium Opus*. In 1924, it was united with a similar cause that a Jesuit had undertaken three years before. From that time on it developed rapidly by means of intense propaganda, soon supported by a quarterly bulletin printed by the Order, and a monthly newssheet.[15] The council of Shanghai recommended it to everyone that year. Dom Ollitrault certainly approved of praying for this intention, but it seemed to him that the degree of involvement of our communities was not at all in harmony with our silent and hidden life. He did not see that it was necessary to "shake up the world by means of trombones, drums and trumpets . . ." (January 14, 1924, letter to the Procurator). Nevertheless, congratulations and encouragement from the Pope were coming in. On August 31, 1925, there were already 350,000 associates among whom were 11 cardinals and 112 bishops. Three years later there were 800,000, and in 1930 Dom Nogues announced that a million would be attained by the end of the year.

All the same, this cause became a financial burden,[16] and was time-consuming for those sending the bulletins to associates. In 1931, the abbot of Timadeuc prepared a long report in favor of the Order's abandoning the work, which aroused a lively reaction from Dom Louis Brun. The Acts of the General Chapter of 1931 do not mention it. Dom Dominique had probably been asked to withdraw his report. But after the war, in 1946, the suggestion to discontinue the initiative was adopted by the General Chapter.[17]

CALDEY

A group of Anglicans had reestablished the Benedictine way of life in the High Church of England, and founded a monastery on the island of Caldey, on soil with an ancient monastic tradition in Wales. They were able to buy it in 1906, thanks to considerable gifts from Protestant faithful. They had great impact, thanks to their magazine *Pax*. But after some difficulties with their hierarchy, who found them too Catholic, and in line with their own evolution, they decided in 1913 to separate from the Anglican communion and become Catholic. The event caused

15 The publication of a bulletin had been decided at the General Chapter of 1924. Its maximum distribution seems to have been around 12,000 copies sent out by our monasteries. Dom Anselme Le Bail was involved in editing it.

16 Dom Louis Brun wanted it to remain absolutely free in order to gain more associates. However, the 1924 General Chapter spoke of subscriptions to the bulletin and gifts.

17 Since no one knew to whom this decision should be transmitted, the abbot of Timadeuc at the Chapter of 1948 accepted to continue the project. But the religious context was no longer the same and the 1954 Chapter felt that it was not timely to resume and increase the propaganda in favor of the initiative; it only recommended that the communities continue to pray for this intention.

a sensation, and in the climate of the times, which did not promote ecumenism, it gave rise to triumphalism on one side and anger on the other. Not only did the generous gifts cease, but certain donors also required reimbursement of money given for purchasing the property. Moreover, since the material management of the community was not the best (these Benedictines were not good farmers), the community went headlong into financial disaster ten years later. They had to sell the property and go elsewhere.

The Holy See feared that this reversal would affect its relationship with the Anglicans. Dom Ollitrault, who knew Caldey and had gone there several times beginning in 1913, when he was superior at Wood-Barton, was asked by Pius XI to find a solution that would be honorable for everyone.[18] At the end of the 1924 Chapter Dom Jean-Baptiste went to Caldey, but it did not seem possible that the community could become Cistercian, as the Holy See wished; its rhythm of life was too different from ours. Dom Ollitrault thought that was the end of the matter. The Holy See insisted, however, and proposed that the Order buy the island come what may. In April 1925, after a visit in the company of Irish and English abbots and the abbots of Timadeuc and Sept-Fons, Dom Ollitrault proposed that the Order, with the help of a loan, take charge of the debts of the Benedictines, and allow them to stay on the island for three more years. At that time no one saw who could replace them. If our French houses were threatened with expulsion, the Benedictines would leave the island to them. The payment of the debts would make us the owners. After this we would see what should be done. The Holy See was very grateful for this arrangement, but it caused many worries for Dom Jean-Baptiste.

It was necessary to act quickly to satisfy the creditors who were threatening to reclaim the island. Somewhat difficult negotiations were established with the founder of Caldey, then in America, Dom Carlisle, the legal owner. The first debts were paid, and the Chapter of 1925 went even further. At this Chapter, several houses made contributions, and a financial arrangement was established. The Order could thus pay off the mortgage on the island and become the owner, allowing it to remain a Catholic property. The farm and livestock were also purchased, and three monks of Timadeuc[19] came to assist the Benedictines at the end of the year for the management of the property, so that it would not lose its value. When the Benedictines left they would be given financial assistance.

In November of 1926, the Abbot General and the abbot of Timadeuc visited the

18 The request became official in a letter from the cardinal Prefect of the Congregation for Religious dated April 6, 1925. In fact, Dom Ollitrault had been contacted in April 1924, but he had answered that he needed to wait for the green light of the General Chapter in September to begin the process.

19 Frs. Corentin and Gérard and Br. François. Fr. Corentin Guyader would be elected abbot of Melleray September 28, 1928.

community, which was experiencing rapid growth with new recruits, so much so that it was considering buying back the island! A year later, Dom Anselm Le Bail was looking for a place to make a foundation, because his community was getting a little crowded at Scourmont. They needed either to build or to make a foundation. He was thinking of England, so that it could eventually serve as a refuge for the community if it was necessary to go into exile. Was Caldey the ideal place? A letter dated February 18, 1928, showed some hesitation on the part of the Abbot General, who nonetheless invited the abbot of Scourmont to accompany him on a trip to the island. This trip was decisive, because the financial difficulties were being settled thanks to the generosity of a distinguished benefactor who turned out to be the abbot of Tre Fontane. Thus, in March of 1928, the community of Scourmont accepted the idea of a foundation on Caldey. Three monks went there to replace those from Timadeuc in July, but the Benedictines still dreamed of being able to repurchase the island. Finally, due to an insufficient number of benefactors, they decided to leave at the end of the three years as planned, in December 1928, but not without demanding reimbursement for recent deficits, which obliged Dom Jean-Baptiste to travel to London while he was hospitalized with a bad foot. It was on January 6, 1929, that regular Cistercian life began at Caldey.[20] Several weeks later, Dom Ollitrault died, the one whom Scourmont considered the true founder of Caldey.

VOYAGE TO AMERICA

His bad foot immobilized Dom Jean-Baptiste at Melleray in February 1928. Nevertheless, as we saw, he went to Caldey in March with Dom Anselm Le Bail. Shortly after returning, he set out for the United States in April. It had already been nineteen years since the Abbot General had visited houses across the Atlantic. Dom Obrecht, abbot of Gethsemani, had invited him earlier for the triple jubilee of 1924,[21] but Dom Jean-Baptiste could not undertake such a long trip then. He thus set out in the spring of 1928, with Dom Fabien Dütter, auxiliary abbot of Cîteaux. Dom Obrecht welcomed him in New York, and brought him to Gethsemani. After the Regular Visitation of the community, he went on to New Melleray, accompanied by Dom Vital Klinsky, former abbot of Achel who had retired to Gethsemani after his resignation in 1927. At Prairies in Winnipeg, where he arrived on May 8, he met up with Dom Pacomius, the abbot of Lac, who came to see him there. Dom

20 When the bishop, Mgr Vaughan, asked Pius the XI for a blessing for the Trappists that he was going to receive at Caldey, he responded "I will give them not one blessing but three."

21 Adjusting the dates somewhat, the three jubilees were: 75 years since the foundation, the abbot's 50 years of profession, and his 25 years as abbot.

Jean-Baptiste asked him to accompany him while visiting the Canadian houses. It was said that he left peace wherever he went, and never left a house without settling every little difficulty. It was from Oka that he went out to the other Canadian houses. After the Regular Visitation there (May 15–20), he did those of Mistassini, Saint Romuald (where they were celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of their foundation), and Calvaire. This monastery had just been founded, and several days later the abbot of Bonnecombe, the Father Immediate, came to preside over the election of the first prior. Returning to Oka on June 7, Dom Jean-Baptiste said goodbye to the community, and returned to the United States for the Regular Visitation of Our Lady of the Valley (June 11–14). Dom Obrecht met him there and had him meet his great friend, Cardinal Dougherty of Philadelphia; he then accompanied him to the boat in New York.

THE LAST MONTHS

Just as he was leaving for France, Dom Ollitrault learned of the hardship that had struck Melleray, and it touched him deeply. It was the sudden death of Dom Ambrose Bec, his successor, on Saturday evening, June 16, 1928, in the saddest and most troubling of circumstances.[22] As soon as he arrived on French soil, he went to spend several days with his former community, to comfort it by his presence. On July 5 he met with several abbots in Paris, and with them went on to Rome. But at the beginning of August he made the Regular Visitation at Westmalle, after stops at Fille Dieu and Oelenberg. The event at Melleray added to his cares and fatigue. Three times during the General Chapter in September he offered his resignation. The Caldey affair and his journey to America constituted in his eyes a good epilogue to his time as Abbot General.[23] But the reactions of the capitulants made him give up this idea. He would remain in office, he said, because "a religious should give of himself even in his incapacities and infirmities." Nevertheless the Chapter demanded that he take some time to rest. Soon after, on October 25, Pius XI, during an audience with Dom Leon, abbot of Tre Fontane, suggested that the Abbot General get more assistance, so as not to become so tired; doing

22 The cause of his death has never been officially stated. It seems that there was some kind of poisoning and the death that followed several hours later was not a natural one. Some serious indications led to suspicions that a family brother was responsible for it and that he had done so thinking it would please the prior. The medical examiner and the Attorney General (with whom the prior met) reacted as if they wanted to cover up the affair before it became a scandal. But the persistent rumors of a violent death spread and tarnished the reputation of the monastery for quite some time, especially among the clergy. The written testimonies of the elders of that time were deliberately destroyed. Without doubt Dom Ollitrault knew more about it, but today we can go no farther than hypothesis.

23 He had suggested his resignation at the preceding Chapter, when he had lost his voice and was recovering slowly from the surgery on the cyst in his throat.

everything himself was not a good method, he said. But how to get him to agree? After the Chapter, Dom Jean-Baptiste went to Tamié, then Orval; then he presided over the election at Melleray, waiting there for the consent of the one elected, who was at Caldey; then he went to Cîteaux and soon returned to Melleray on October 10, taking up again his role as abbot, even going so far as to harvest the potatoes with the brothers in order to "calm" the community and not to leave it without a superior as long as Dom Corentin had not yet arrived.[24] "So you see," he wrote to the Procurator from Melleray on October 2, "this is the rest that the General Chapter insisted on. As if their insistence makes it easy to arrange . . . ! *You* rest as much as possible in my place!"[25] On October 18 he wrote to him again: "Having two responsibilities, I scarcely have time for leisure! Long live the rest demanded by the General Chapter!" The Lord was going to take care of him, giving him a rest, but it was an unfortunate one, alas!

He proposed, after having guided the first steps of Dom Corentin at Melleray, going to Bricquebec in mid-November, visiting his older sister, who was a religious, on the way. She was retired in Saint-James and ill, and he hadn't seen her for three years. He then planned to set out for Cîteaux and Rome. But these fine plans were turned upside down. Leaving Melleray, he went straight to the Bizet clinic in Paris to have his foot taken care of. It was bothering him again, and this time the cause was correctly identified: it was diabetes.[26] He wrote to his sister that the wound was becoming infected, and it was feared that gangrene would set in. He would have to stop traveling at least five weeks. They hoped that treatments with ultra violet light would quickly have an effect. But the doctor insisted on rest. The sick man obtained a leave of forty-eight hours to participate in the abbatial blessing of Dom Corentin, on December 12. A bit later he was also allowed to go to London to straighten out the disagreement with the Benedictines of Caldey, and then at the end of the year to make the pastoral visit that Dom Vital was asking for at Bricquebec. In fact, however, this visit did not bring immediate peace to the community, and it resulted in an exchange of letters that would preoccupy him in the first weeks of 1929. In these letters, Dom Vital attests to the Abbot General's state of fatigue.

Dom Jean-Baptiste arrived in Rome on January 10, 1929, extremely tired. There were 135 letters awaiting him. But even if his foot was recovering, it was now his intestines that were causing trouble. On February 16 he caught a cold at Tre Fon-

24 He only left Caldey on November 5. Dom Jean-Baptiste was waiting for him at Timadeuc and brought him to Melleray on November 10.

25 He was bothered by a complaint lodged with the Holy See by a monk of Melleray who was against the election. He said that the President had handled the election so badly that the announced result should be invalidated.

26 He said humorously that he felt "the wave of laziness that threatened to lay me flat" coming on !

tane; the following days he had some fever and felt exhausted. The doctor, who was called in on January 22, diagnosed bronchial pneumonia, and, noticing the weakness of his heart, thought his state was serious. The sick man had no illusions; he had been preparing for death for a month. The next day, Saturday, at 2:00 p.m., the abbot of Tre Fontane gave Dom Jean-Baptiste the last sacraments. At 10:00 p.m. he seemed to enter his last agony, but then he seemed to improve, so much so that he was thought to be out of danger. Pius XI, who was notified of the Abbot General's state, called for Dom Léon on Sunday at 11:00 a.m., and asked him to give Dom Jean-Baptiste his special blessing. It was during the night of Monday, February 25, toward 4:00 a.m., that Dom Jean-Baptiste died, prematurely worn out. The funeral was celebrated in the chapel of the Sisters of the Precious Blood, where Dom Wyart's was celebrated in 1904, and it was near him that the body of Dom Ollitrault was buried in the cemetery of Tre Fontane.

Many who heard the news were surprised, all the more so because the last illness was short and few knew about it. It was scarcely more that six years since he had been elected Abbot General. His predecessor had died five months earlier. But with reflection, this hasty death was not surprising for those who were closer to him. Dom Dominique, Abbot of Timadeuc, said it well. "What a shock for the entire Order! However, I understand that our General could not overcome pneumonia, that he had been declining for at least a year, and I realized at the blessing of Dom Corentin that he was very tired. God has taken him at the right time because the serious business of Melleray and Caldey has been taken care of, but no one expected such a tragic ending". Certainly his trips, health problems, and concerns were of a nature to wear him out prematurely, even more so because he did not have his own secretary from 1923 on. But everything was aggravated by the fact that he sought to preserve a lifestyle of poverty and ascesis, which to him seemed to be distinctive signs of the Cistercian vocation. The abbot of Oka, who had accompanied him for a month during his travels in Canada, noticed this. He could never convince him to change his old briefcase or his shabby suitcase that no longer had a lock, nor could he make him use the conveniences offered in the well-equipped Canadian Pullman trains. He spent the night on a seat, refusing a private compartment, even though he needed rest, and the trip from Prairies to Oka took 48 hours, with two consecutive nights on the train!

Messages of sympathy flooded the Generalate, not only from abbots and abbesses, but also from the religious superiors of every Congregation, and from bishops and cardinals. They prove that Dom Ollitrault left behind the reputation of a great monastic, even a saint, gifted with many qualities in every respect.

(*see summary table, next page*)

SUMMARY TABLE

YEAR	DATE	DOM OLLITRAULT AND THE ORDER	EXTERNAL EVENTS
1862	April 13	Birth in Brittany (France)	
1884		Novitiate with Marists in England (Paignton)	
1885	June 1	Entrance at Melleray. Novice, June 14	
1887	June 24	Simple profession (perpetual) Subdeacon	
1888		Deacon (March 17) and priest (November 18)	
1890	July 2	Solemn profession, Subprior, Novice Master	
1892	October	Chapter for the Union of the Three Trappist Congregations	
1901	July		Law requiring authorization for the Congregations in France
1902	March 19	Superior/Founder of Wood-Barton, Melleray's refuge in England. Government of Emile Combes	death of Leo XIII; August 4: election of Pius X
1914	August 2 August 20 September 3		Beginning of WWI Death of Pius X Election of Benedict XV
1918	November	Dom O.'s illness (over 3 months)	November 11: armistice
1919	April 25	Death of D. Eugene Vachette, abbot of Melleray	
	Aug. 5	D. Ollitrault elected abbot of Melleray	
1922	Sept. 13 Sept. 18 Nov. 13	Elected Vicar by the General Chapter Bishop Marre's resignation accepted. D. Ollitrault elected Abbot General	Jan. 22: death Benedict XV Feb. 6: election of Pius XI
1923	Feb.–Mar. July 8	Suffering from bad foot Beginnings of Work of the Orient Pium Opus Dom Sauvage, Procurator, died at 47	
1924	September	Start of negotiations about Caldey	
1925	January 26	Approval of the monks' Constitutions	
1926	June 22	Approval of the nuns' Constitutions	
1927	Apr. & ff	Suffering and surgery on a cyst in his throat	
1928	February March Mid-Apr./End of June Mid-Nov. End Dec	Laid up at Melleray for his foot Trip to Caldey with Dom A. Le Bail Trip to North America (U.S. & Canada) Hospitalized 5 weeks for his foot Visits to Caldey & Bricquebec. Return to Rome	
1929	Feb. 25	Death in Rome from bronchial pneumonia	

3.1.2. Dom Herman Joseph Smets

(*The passages in quotation marks without reference are from the anonymous tribute that appeared in the first issue of* Collectanea *after the war of 1939–1945, pp. 1* –11**)

"Dom Herman Joseph (George Joseph) Smets was born on March 29, 1875, in Antwerp, where his family of successful businessmen held a high place in Catholic society. He was the third child in a family of eight in which the most solid piety abounded. He studied with the Jesuits at the College of Notre Dame and did brilliantly. In particular he became a distinguished Latinist. At his Jubilee as abbot in 1936, his professor of rhetoric, Fr. Verest, who was well known in classical studies in Belgium, made a public testimony of the success of his former student. Above all the young man developed the piety that his parents had formed in him and the desire for a life consecrated to God soon emerged in his soul. He himself revealed this in his last writings, the booklet addressed to the Lay Brothers and Sisters in July of 1942: "It is a pleasure for me to remember, as a young high school student on vacation, how much I enjoyed sharing in the work of the dear lay brothers (of Westmalle), with a great deal of clumsiness, slipping in among their two long rows as they recited together their Office in the fields, and seeking other little contacts of this kind" (p. 4). In his last years of high school, he obtained from the Abbot of Westmalle the favor of being allowed to return to the monastery during his vacations. After finishing secondary school on October 16, 1893, at the age of eighteen, he entered the novitiate. He made simple profession on October 21, 1895, and solemn profession on November 1, 1898. On September 23, 1899, he was ordained a priest.[27] His work as secretary for the abbot, as director of the printing office, and confessor for religious and seculars, made the young monk much appreciated. On September 16, 1907, the General Chapter chose him as Dutch language Definitor in Rome. He worked at this for four years until October 30, 1911, when his brothers at Westmalle elected him abbot. On November 21 he received the abbatial blessing from Cardinal Mercier; he was thirty-six years old. In 1922, when Dom Jean-Baptiste Ollitrault of Keryvallan replaced Bishop Marre as head of the Order, the abbot of Westmalle was named Vicar of the Abbot General. After the death of Dom Jean-Baptiste, the General Chapter chose Dom Herman Joseph Smets as Abbot of Cîteaux and Abbot General on July 16, 1929."[28]

27 He was ordained subdeacon on September 17, 1898, and deacon on May 27, 1899. It was Cardinal Goosens who ordained him a priest.

28 One of the Capitulants was participating for the fourth time in the election of a General. It was Dom Jean-Marie Chouteau, abbot of Bellefontaine from December 5, 1866 to December 28, 1929. He had already participated in the election of the two last Vicars of the Congregation of La Trappe.

ABBOT GENERAL

When he returned to the abbey of Westmalle at the beginning of August 1929, the welcome was triumphant. The town council, the local clergy, and the townspeople welcomed him at the entrance of the avenue leading to the abbey. There were speeches, fanfares, firecrackers, and a triumphal arch. Then came the liturgical welcome by the community. Several abbots, mainly from Belgium and Holland, came to be with him. The 300 telegrams that were sent show how much the personality of the Abbot of Westmalle was appreciated. "Divine Providence had prepared him remarkably for his new position as Abbot General. His youth and excellent studies at Antwerp in the cosmopolitan city, where one is in touch with the entire country, had educated him in a culture of vast horizons, and he was closely attuned to all religious matters. And then his time as abbot of Westmalle—former head of the Congregation, mother or grandmother house to most of the Belgian and Dutch monasteries—had taught him the life of not only one house, but of an entire monastic province. He was well acquainted with the French, Dutch, German, English, and Italian languages."

Before leaving Westmalle, he wrote his first circular letter on September 8, 1929, in which he commented on his abbatial motto *Facere et docere* (to do and to teach), which refers to Jesus' attitude as summarized by Luke at the beginning of the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 1:1), and the liturgical prayer for the Pope, "verbo et exemplo quibus praeest proficere."[29] The role of an Abbot General is to maintain peace and unity in the Order, to preserve fervent observance, and to promote an ever more intense interior life. Thus his role was also to protect the monks from the spirit of the times, which was so destructive to sanctification; like the prophet Jeremiah, he was appointed *to uproot and to knock down*, *to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant* (1:9–10). "From his temperament as a man of the North, he had a taste for the necessary authority, a sense of order and discipline, and the conviction that, for a collective ideal like that of a great religious Order, the support of control and firmness was necessary."

At the opening of the 1931 General Chapter he gave a diagnostic overview of the Order forty years after the unification of 1892. Since the positive elements were easily seen, he pointed out certain failures or deviations: the sometimes ineffective way of making the Regular Visitations, the lack of respect for the decisions of the General Chapters, the tendency of some to tone down the "Trappist" character of the Order, which is not only Benedictine or Cistercian. Why shrug one's shoulders

29 "To serve by word and example those over whom he has authority."

at the work of Abbot de Rancé? Is one still a Trappist if one does not observe the austerities of the Rule, enclosure, and silence to the letter, or if one thinks that it is necessary to have an apostolate? At whom was he aiming with these exhortations? Was this about the efforts of Dom Le Bail at having the Cistercian authors and the Rule studied? Was it the ideas of Dom Alexis Presse, who at Tamié wanted to challenge everything that had been added to the Rule over the centuries?[30] But at the beginning of the 1933 Chapter, he proposed these two names as members of the commission whose task it was to study the creation of a periodical, which would be *Collectanea*. This was a sign that he had confidence in them.

One aspect of his approach was to help each abbot in his ministry both by his counsel and by the support he gave to their authority. "He had a lofty notion of the Superior's office, and made it the subject of one of his finest circular letters to all the members of the Order, dated January 1, 1933: *From this lofty notion* (he wrote) *derive certain duties, which are surely best heard mentioned by your Abbot General, since it is not an easy subject for your Superiors to remind you about themselves.* And he invested his own authority in this strong affirmation of the superiors' authority." This assistance to abbots was made concrete in the commentaries given each morning during the General Chapter, year after year, beginning in 1931, on different aspects of the abbatial task, a sort of running commentary on Chapter 2 of the Rule.[31] The opening speech was an insufficient forum for such a topic; he therefore used the opening talks to bring up questions that the Chapter would need to address.

VISITS TO THE COMMUNITIES

Another way of exercising his paternity to the Order was his visits to the communities. On October 12, 1929, he wrote that he had already visited twelve houses in three weeks, which brought to nineteen the visits he had made since his election on July 16. He stayed on at Westmalle until the blessing of his successor as head of this abbey, and then went on to Cîteaux for All Saints. He asked for Fr. Etienne Klein of Rochefort as his personal secretary. These visits, usually of four or five days' duration, took up most of his time. "He visited not only countries close by—France, Belgium, and Holland—but also went to the United States, Canada, England, Ireland, Switzerland, Yugoslavia, and Palestine. He was keen on being present at im-

30 Dom Presse had published that very year in *Revue Mabillon* (tome 21, pp. 49–60) a provocative article that even Dom Le Bail found excessive: "L'Abbé de Rancé a-t-il voulu fonder une observance particulière?"

31 These commentaries, published as offprints and inserted with other circulars, especially the January 1 circular letter, were printed at Westmalle as a series of volumes with continuous pagination, 580 pages in all. The commentary prepared for the Chapter of 1939, which did not take place, was read during the Chapter of 1946, after his death.

portant occasions for the life of the Order, and when he was not able to be there personally, he was there at least by his affectionate and kind messages."

His health quickly deteriorated. In April of 1930, on a visit to Fille-Dieu, he felt a stiffness in his right arm that would not go away despite the massages his secretary gave him. He had to dictate his letters or type them. When he left for Laval—where a misunderstanding led to no one meeting the travelers at the station, which obliged them to take a taxi and awake the sisters in the gate house, causing a great stir—he felt a tightness around the heart that made him perspire abundantly. These were the first symptoms of a sickness that would kill him twelve years later. He also made the Regular Visitation at Igny, but on May 28, he was forced to take two weeks of rest at Saint-Sixte. The doctor prescribed a strict diet: no meat, eggs, wine, beer, coffee or liquor, but, rather, milk, vegetables, fruit, and water. Ugh, said the General, but the secretary concluded it was all for the better, because he was getting tired of the copious meals served in the guesthouses or the chaplaincies of the monasteries being visited. But in mid June the visits recommenced: Caldey, Cîteaux, Rome, Aiguebelle, Oelenberg, and Westmalle, before the General Chapter of September; then Saint-Sixte, Mont-des-Cats, Soleilmont, and several communities in Holland. All Saints was celebrated at Cîteaux, and on November 6 he left for Rome, where he spent the winter.

On April 22, 1931, he embarked for America, accompanied by Dom Fabien Dütter, and more or less followed the same itinerary as his two predecessors: Gethsemani, New Melleray, Prairies, Oka (after two nights and two days on the train), Saint Romuald, Mistassini, Calvaire, and Assumption; then back to Oka and on to Our Lady of the Valley. On June 16, after a visit to New York City, he returned to France on the *La Fayette*, disembarking at Le Havre on Friday, June 24 in the afternoon. He wrote that he was able to meet 605 members of the Order in the course of those two months.

These encounters were his joy, for he felt animated by a great love for everyone in the Order. These occasions were, as he wrote in his circular letter of January 1, 1930, *moments of a profound and unspeakable bliss*. He even spoke of *hours of spiritual intoxication*, which were like *a mysterious balm* that flooded his soul *with immense tranquility and sweet peace*.

1933 brought him a painful trial. The 1932 General Chapter had accepted the resignation of the Procurator, Dom Robert Lescand, who was seventy,[32] and elect-

32 Dom Robert Lescand, like his two predecessors, filed all the letters he received from the Abbot General when away on his travels, so as to be useful to historians, making it possible to retrace the movements of the Abbot General. Alas, his successor did not keep up this practice, and we are deprived of precious correspondence. Also, Dom Robert's personal letters to the Abbot General, which the latter attested were so enjoyable, were not preserved, it seems.

ed in his place Dom Fabien Dütter, auxiliary abbot of Cîteaux, former Definitor and secretary of Bishop Marre. Dom Fabien had gone to assist as "notary" at the election of the abbot of Briquebec on August 7, 1933. The newly-elect, Dom Raphael Gouraud, on his way to pay his respects to the bishop of the diocese, the afternoon of the election, was driving Dom Fabian to the train station. But the car was overturned by a truck that appeared suddenly from a side road without respecting the right of way. Dom Fabien was killed on the spot, and Dom Raphael died the next day.[33] "His voice was choked with emotion," the minutes of the General Chapter on the following September 12 stated, "when the Most Reverend Father President spoke of the terrible catastrophe that removed from the Order its venerable and distinguished Procurator General, whose loss caused such a sadness in all our monasteries."

LETTERS TO THE COMMUNITIES

Dom Herman Joseph was sure that "monastic souls have a great need of instruction in the things of God. In the special form of their vocation, it is necessary for them to receive a teaching proper to their state. Moreover, in addition to knowledge of the privileged ways of perfection that constitute the religious state in general, there is need for knowledge of the particular elements and privileged means that are proper to the Order and that express its spirit." This is the task of the abbot and novice master of each monastery. But the Abbot General "wanted to contribute to it with all his might, for he had no greater desire than that souls be enlightened and thus sustained in their holy vocation. He began providing regular teaching from the Abbot General through a circular letter addressed to all the communities at the beginning of each year. He called them *fatherly New Year's gifts*. In intentionally simple language, so that all could understand, and with a strong paternal tone, he recalled and commented on one or other of the values that are essential for Cistercian souls. Carefully prepared, and with numerous quotations expressing the purest spirit of Saint Benedict, our Founders, Saint Bernard, or the early Cistercian writers, these circular letters constituted a firm and solid teaching, making clear the fundamental points of doctrine. They will continue to be documents where souls can always find light and direction in the true Cistercian spirit. For example there are letters on the interior life, humility and obedience, on

33 He was succeeding Dom Louis Kervingant, himself a victim of an auto accident on June 3 the previous year. One can imagine the shock that these two successive accidents caused in the community of Bricquebec. On August 7, the former abbot of Port-du-Salut, Dom Berchmans Chauveau, was also in the car, and died of his injuries three months later.

the authentic spirit of the Order, on the family character of Cistercian life, on high regard for superiors, on generosity, etc."

Among these letters, we might point out the one written on the priesthood for monks, on the occasion of his fortieth anniversary of ordination in 1939. Unfortunately it was written in Latin, which makes it less accessible in our day. He also wrote two booklets: "one entitled *Introduction to the Trappist Life*, and the other *To Our Very Dear Lay Brothers and Lay Sisters*: *On the Love and Fidelity Due to their Vocation*. The first, with its three parts—Vocational Discernment, The Novitiate in General, the Trappist Novitiate—is a precious vade-mecum (as its venerable author called it) for the choir novices and postulants. The work *had been inspired,* he wrote, *by a concern for strengthening the religious spirit of our Founders, . . .for handing on the Order's deposit of holy traditions, and for assuring its constant progress toward the purest Cistercian ideal*." To the lay brothers and sisters he recalls "the glory and spiritual riches of their vocation, the perfection available to them, and the rights and duties of their state. These are pages filled with charity and an exquisite piety; and those in which he speaks of the Virgin Mary in a special way as being the tender Mother of the Cistercian Brothers and Sisters are extremely touching."

Wishing to foster a better understanding of the Rule, he took the trouble in 1938 to publish a *Repertorium summae artis spiritualis prout in Regula monachis exercenda proponitur.*

COLLECTANEA[34]

"It was above all in a spirit of familial charity that he founded *Collectanea*. He wanted to strengthen the fraternal ties between the communities with a common interest in spirituality, history, liturgy, and local Cistercian chronicles, in order to help preserve among us the union of hearts and unity of aspirations so highly recommended by the incomparable Charter of Charity. As we know, the project, and, once the General Chapter gave it approval, and the actual production of the Review were really the work of the most Reverend Father General. The drawing up of the initial outline, the organization, the gathering of articles, the editing, the choice of typeface (skills of the former director of the monastic print shop at Westmalle), and even the correction of the proofs—he saw to all of it for the first issue of the Review. And his zealous care for the familial publication *by which we can get to know one another and love one another more* never ceased. His happiness could not be contained when the Sovereign Pontiff assured him that he had

34 See in Part 3, the chapter on the review *Collectanea*.

received the Review and leafed through it with interest." The General Chapter of 1933 approved the creation of the publication and appointed a doctrinal committee of readers made up of seven abbots, including Dom Chautard, Dom Le Bail, and Dom Presse.

PARTICULAR EVENTS DURING DOM HERMAN JOSEPH'S TIME AS ABBOT GENERAL

a) *First Centenary of the Proclamation of Saint Bernard as Doctor of the Church*

This jubilee was announced in Dom Herman-Joseph's circular letter dated March 30, 1930 in which he asked the monks: are you sufficiently familiar with the teaching of this doctor? Do you breathe in enough of the good scent of his life and example? He may be a doctor of the Church, but he was especially *their* doctor. Several days before, the Abbot General had assured the Holy Father of the monks' desire to take advantage of this centenary to improve their mission as contemplatives in the Church, being not only reservoirs but also canals of holiness. Pius XI thanked them through a letter from Cardinal Pacelli on April 1, and another pontifical letter addressed to the two Cistercian Abbots General on July 20.

Just as the 1913 General Chapter had began with a triduum on the occasion of the eighth centenary of the arrival of Bernard at Cîteaux, so too was the 1930 Chapter preceded by a triduum organized by Dom Fabien Dütter, auxiliary abbot of Cîteaux. It opened on September 9, under the presidency of the Archbishop of Lyon, Cardinal Maurin. Each day the sermon-instruction of the pontifical Mass was given by Bishop Gonon of Moulins on the theme of Saint Bernard and the religious life. In the afternoon, at the end of pontifical Vespers, an abbot gave a conference: Dom Anselm Le Bail (Scourmont), Dom Tarcise Van Der Kamp (Westmalle), and Dom Dominique Nogues (Timadeuc) each explained an aspect of Saint Bernard's doctrine. The last day Bishop Ruch of Strasbourg spoke about Saint Bernard's dedication to the Pope[35].

In this series of centenaries, let us note that the eighth centenary of the death of Saint Stephen was commemorated during the 1934 Chapter with two brilliant conferences by Dom Chautard and Dom Nogues. The centenary of the foundation of Aiguebelle in 1937 was an important event, presided over by a pontifical legate, Cardinal Verdier, surrounded by twenty Bishops and as many abbots, who came from their General Chapter. The event included the raising of the church to the rank of a minor basilica and a Marian Congress.

35 A booklet written by H. Charrier, published by *Cîteaux* in 1932, told of the "centenary celebrations" and included the talks of Bishops Gonon and Ruch, as well as that of Dom Anselm Le Bail.

b) *The Dom Alexis Presse Affair*

This complex and sensitive matter is dealt with in greater detail in a special section (§ 3.2.3, below). Dom Alexis had his own vision of the Cistercian life, which did not coincide with that of the majority of the General Chapter, and could not be put into practice while he remained in the Order. Nevertheless, that is what he tried to do, at least at the beginning, but not without coming into conflict with Dom Smets, whom he tried to bypass, counting on support from the Holy See, which never materialized. Perhaps it was this situation that best exemplifies one of Dom Herman-Joseph's character traits, noted by the author of the *post mortem* eulogy that came out in *Collectanea* as soon as it could be published after the war. Having spoken of Dom Smet's firmness of character, the writer adds: "The price of his spirit of authority was that at times it was difficult for him to tolerate being contradicted, which he interpreted as opposition. But we realized that this susceptibility was the other side of the total dedication of a man for whom only the Order counted. As for the pettiness, ignorance, and meanness that he experienced and had to deal with, as does anyone in authority, although they afflicted the heart of a father by the smallness of soul they revealed in such people, he immediately forgave them. A valued counselor, he mistrusted foolhardy haste, and if people sometimes commented on his slowness in making decisions, it was that he liked to reflect, consult, and pray before giving a definite opinion. For him, wisdom and accuracy should never be lacking when the responsibility of authority is involved."

Let us note that the 1936 Chapter, which relieved Dom Alexis of his charge as abbot of Tamié, also deposed the titular prior of Prairies. But that affair caused less of a stir.

c) *The Construction of the Generalate on the Aventine*

In 1932, as part of its urban development plans, the Italian government was considering eliminating Via San Giovanni in Laterano, where the Generalate was located. The Order risked losing its property, and sought another location for the Generalate. A 4000 square-meter plot was found on the Aventine in Piazza Santa Prisca. During the 1932 Chapter, Dom Obrecht, abbot of Gethsemani, generously offered the 700,000 liras necessary for its purchase.[36] In fact, however, given the

36 It was then that Dom Smets revealed the name of the donor who offered the 2,500,000 francs needed to settle the Caldey matter, thus allowing the Scourmont community to make a foundation there. See also the section on Dom Ollitrault, § 3.1.1, above.

depreciation of the dollar and further demands from the owner of the land, the sum was insufficient. The abbot of Westmalle, who offered 500,000 Belgian francs, and other donors, supplemented the funds. But there was also need to build. It was hoped that the indemnities of expropriation would cover the expenses, the capitulants taking care of the rest if necessary. But in the meantime, a loan was taken out, and the abbey of Tre Fontane paid the installments.

In 1936, in his opening talk at the General Chapter, Dom Herman-Joseph described, with great satisfaction, the new Generalate, which had been occupied since October of the preceding year: "Everything, he said, in the inspiration of its style as well as in the details of its architecture, its sober decor and the disposition of the regular places, contribute to fully satisfying the demands of Cistercian taste, and favoring the practice of our monastic usages in the measure in which the particular lifestyle of those who are called to live there makes it possible." He saw it simultaneously as a symbol of collaboration and union of hearts—which had allowed its construction—and as a place were Cistercian traditions and purity of observance could be safeguarded. A statue of Saint Robert held the place of honor in the central garden, an invitation not to disown his spirit. Dom Smets had wanted to build a complete monastery, but the City of Rome's development plans only allowed for buildings after the manner of a grand villa with three wings. But he himself drew up the plans so that all would match the monastic characteristics he had decided on. For him it was a personal success.[37]

d) *Concern for the Far East: A Special Visitor*

The first foundations in China and Japan date from the end of the nineteenth century. It took some time for them to begin developing. The Boxer rebellion at the beginning of the twentieth century nearly put the young Chinese monks' community out of existence. For the monks in Japan, the first twenty-five years were difficult, and local recruitment increased only after the First World War. In 1919 it again seemed urgent to send reinforcements from Europe. The nuns' community of Tenshien also grew slowly. The first professions took place in May of 1915.[38] Inculturation did not take place immediately (the church of O.L. of Consolation

37 In the end the former house was not expropriated. Its sale would allow Cîteaux to purchase a large farm near the abbey, whose revenues would serve to cover the expenses of the Generalate. This was decided at the 1952 General Chapter. But this sale was only made by the Definitory in 1962 and served in part to cover the costs of the construction of Monte Cistello.

38 The Novice Mistress, Mother Berchmans Piguet who came from Laval in 1902, was already consumed by tuberculosis; she died in the odor of sanctity the following September 24, less than forty years old. Was this sacrifice the seed of vocations? Among the professed at that time was the future first Japanese abbess, Mother Cecilia Hirata (elected in 1942). See the biography of Mother Berchmans by Thomas Merton, *Exile Ends in Glory*.

was built on the Romanesque model of the thirteenth century), and even seemed unfeasible to certain overly skeptical abbots. Both Chinese and Japanese were difficult for the founders to learn, but how could they form new recruits well without knowing their language and without having adequate reading material to offer?

Because of the difficult conditions and length of journey (six weeks by boat), Regular Visitations, especially for the monks, could obviously not be annual, nor could superiors come to General Chapters every year. In general, the Visitor for the monks in China also had to visit Japan, and vice-versa.[39] Dom Vital Lehodey, Father Immediate of the two Japanese communities, was able to get to Japan only twice, in 1900 and 1926. The first visit—without the possibility of going to Our Lady of Consolation, because of political turmoil—lasted five months, and affected his health. In China, the community founded in 1883 received its first visit from Dom Chautard only in January of 1913; then they had to wait until Dom Bernard Delauze, abbot of Dombes and later of Aiguebelle, was delegated to make visitations in 1921 and 1926. The Abbot of Sept-Fons himself returned to China in 1929, wanting to see his sons again for the last time. The General Chapter of 1923 confided to the abbot in China the administration of the two Japanese monasteries. These powers then passed to Dom Bernard Delauze. On the fiftieth anniversary of Consolation, in 1933, there were already forty-one tombs in the cemetery, and the total number of monks at that time was ninety-five. The Fathers Immediate were not able to give their daughter houses all the time and energy needed, nor sufficient assistance in personnel and material resources.

Even though Dom Vital's successor to went to Japan twice, in May of 1930 and November of 1931, the General Chapter of 1933, which the two monk superiors of China and Japan attended, judged it useful to name a special and permanent Visitor for the monasteries in the Far East. This Visitor, who would be given abbatial powers, would make the Visitation every two years, and spend the rest of the time seeking personnel from western monasteries capable of helping out in these houses. He would be the official delegate of the Fathers Immediate, who retained all their rights, but consented to avoid delegating other persons when they were not able to go to the Far East themselves. The prior of Mont-des-Cats, Dom Gerard Haverbeque, was named to this charge, and set out for the Orient at the end of the summer of 1934. Dom Herman-Joseph thought it would be good to write a letter to the communities in the Far East, dated from Saint-Sixte, October 30, 1933, to tell them of the General Chapter's decisions.

In this letter he recalled the importance Pius XI attached to evangelization in the Far East and to the role of monastic life. In his encyclical on the Missions, *Re-*

39 The nuns of Tenshien were able to have Regular Visitations by the superiors of Phare (1899) or from China (1916 and 1924).

rum Ecclesiae, published on February 28, 1926, he had in fact spoken in praise of the presence of our monastery in China. Our Lady of Consolation began to grow to such a point that it transformed into a foundation the annex house it had created in 1923 in a more accessible place. This was Our Lady of Liesse, founded in 1928. For its part, Tenshien founded Seiboen in 1935. Elsewhere in Europe, *l'Oeuvre de prières* for the conversion of the Far East,[40] with the blessing of the Pope, drew these countries to the attention of the West.

Tragic events soon took place. In China, nationalist and communist troops were fighting, since Chiang Kai-shek had taken power in 1925 and Mao Tse-tung had instituted a soviet republic at Kiang-si in 1931. Japan declared war on China in 1937, after having already invaded Manchuria. Liesse was in the combat zone. Several religious, ill or ageing, were given shelter at the Mission in the neighboring village, Chang Ting-fu, under the leadership of Fr. Emmanuel Robial.[41] But on the evening of October 9, 1937, pillaging Japanese soldiers invaded the Mission and led away the Europeans, among whom were Bishop Schraven, the local Ordinary, and Fr. Emmanuel. A little later, not far from there, their remains were found along with some of their half charred possessions: early signs of the way of the cross that the Chinese monks would experience ten years later.

e) Activities of the Liturgy Commission

After the decree of the Sacred Congregation of Rites, March 8, 1913, which legitimized the 1689 Ritual, and allowed for the revision of our liturgical books according to this ritual, the liturgy commission was assigned this work, which had already gotten under way with a first draft of the ceremonial in 1906. The 1914–1918 war prevented the commission from getting started. But Dom Malet had already drawn up a memorandum in 1913, and published a long study on the principles of a Cistercian liturgy.[42] The updating of the rubrics of the Missal was approved in 1924.

In 1928, the commission in charge of studying the Ceremonial was made up of Dom Malet, Dom Le Bail, and Dom Presse. The corrected text was ready for experimental use in 1931. Dom Malet handed over the responsibility to Dom Alexis Presse for health reasons, but the commission had been filled out in 1932, and then numbered ten members. At the same time it was preparing a Pontifical for the use of abbots and also a rite of taking the habit and of profession for the nuns

40 See §3.1.1. on this prayer crusade.

41 Coming from La Trappe to O.L. of Consolation in 1923, he was sent to O.L. of Liesse in August of 1928. For these events, cf. Fr. Beltrame Quattrochi, *Monaci nella Tormenta*, pp. 80-98.

42 *La Liturgie cistercienne. Ses origines, sa constitution, sa transformation, sa restauration*. Westmalle 1921.

(1935). When Dom Alexis left the Order after being deposed as abbot of Tamié, the work of the commission was disrupted. But in 1938 a certain number of items were ready for approval. Dom Smet's opening conference at the General Chapter was entirely on liturgical matters. He spoke of the revision of our liturgical books, undertaken to save our ancient traditions and our respected privileges, in view of fulfilling the authenticity and uniformity of our rites. On a congratulatory note, he mentioned the more frequent use of ferial psalms at Lauds and Vespers, as decided in 1932 and obtained through indults on December 4, 1933 and June 23, 1934, and the publication of the ceremony for the reception of sisters. "And," he added, "this fortieth General Chapter welcomes with infinite gratitude another new work long awaited in our monasteries, because it will put to an end the most deplorable differences, that is, the Pontifical and the Ceremonial of Abbots, as well as the preparatory work on the new Menology, and, on top of it all, the solution of supplementary questions that we see on the agenda." Dom Herman-Joseph next elaborated on the role of the liturgy—and thus the monastic life dedicated to it—in the mission of the Catholic Church, and the legitimacy of our own rites in the heart of this Church. He also took advantage of the occasion to affirm the work of the liturgy commission, which, by steady work and meetings between Chapters, had come up with well-documented and irrefutable proposals.

f) The Persecution in Spain

On October 6, 1936, Dom Herman-Joseph sent a circular to the Order to announce the tragic events that had just taken place at Viaceli: the pillage of the monastery, its closing, and the imprisonment and dispersal of the monks. Alas, the worst was yet to come. Already in the preceding years there had been mention of the precarious situation of the Spanish monasteries, and several abbots had offered hospitality if the Spanish communities, caught in the vortex of the civil war, needed to go into exile. In fact, only the community of Viaceli had to suffer at the hands of the Republicans; the others were in areas quickly occupied by Franco's army. At the beginning of December, several monks of Viaceli, who were regrouping as well as they could, were arrested and killed.[43] Other individual executions would follow. In all there were 16 martyrs for the faith.

43 See below the Chapter consecrated to the martyrs of the twentieth century. In fact three monks had already been executed when Dom Herman-Joseph wrote his letter. But this was as yet unknown by his informant, a monk of Viaceli who had gone to Ireland.

DEATH

The declaration of the war in 1939 "was a most painful trial for the Abbot General. The lack of meetings of the General Chapter, the sad isolation that he experienced, the impossibility of contact with most of the houses, the difficult situation of a certain number of monasteries following the mobilization of some of the religious, and the consequences of the war, touched him deeply. Feeling his life ebbing away, he often expressed the desire that God wait to call him to Himself until he could return to his beloved Abbey of Westmalle, where his affections drew him as to a particularly loved center: *Ad Centrum*, according to the motto of this dear monastery. But the Lord wanted him to die at his command post. On October 28, 1942 he had a heart attack, the result of an illness he had had for twelve years. He appeared to improve for several weeks, but then his state worsened on December 24, his heart steadily weakened, and pneumonia set in.[44] On January 1 he was able to speak with His Eminence Cardinal Tisserant and several other friends who came to visit him. On January 2 the Procurator General gave him the last sacraments. Very calm, the venerable man visibly joined in with the prayers, and abandoned himself to the mercy of God and confidence in the blessed Queen of Cîteaux. Meanwhile, His Holiness, Pius XII, sent him a special blessing. This expression of the affectionate sympathy of the Holy Father was his last great joy. More than anyone, he professed a filial love for the Vicar of Christ; he had earned the sympathy, esteem and confidence of the Sovereign Pontiffs Pius XI and Pius XII and those who helped them in the government of the Church. In that particularly private environment, the discretion of the Most Reverend Father Dom Herman-Joseph was very much appreciated; he practiced this very Trappist virtue to an excellent degree, going out very little, and not wanting to attract attention. He died very quietly, on January 4, 1943, early in the morning. The funeral was celebrated in the Generalate chapel in the presence of a numerous and select assembly of ambassadors, bishops, abbots, superiors general, prelates, etc. The final absolution was given by the Reverend Father Procurator General, who had sung the Mass, and by the Reverend Father Abbots of Tre Fontane and Frattocchie. Then the mortal remains were taken to Tre Fontane where they were buried near those of his immediate predecessor, Dom Jean-Baptiste Olllitrault of Kéryvallan. A profound tribute was given to the nobility of his life, totally dedicated to his monastic vocation, and whose abbatial motto, *Facere et Docere*, had been realized in the constant practice of duty."

44 He had to drink often and as he wanted to fast in order to receive Holy Communion, it was brought to him shortly after midnight.

SUMMARY TABLE

YEAR	DATE	DOM SMETS AND THE CISTERCIAN ORDER	EXTERNAL EVENTS
1875	March 23	Birth at Antwerp (Belgium)	
1893	October 16	Entrance at Westmalle	
1895	October 21	First Profession	
1898	November l	Solemn Profession	
1899	September 23	Ordination to the Priesthood	
1900			In China, the Boxer Rebellion
1902	July 20 August 4		Death of Leo XIII Election of Pius X
1907	September 16	Elected Definitor	
1911	October 30	Elected Abbot of Westmalle	
1914	August 2 August 20 September 3		First World War Death of Pius X Election of Benedict XV
1918	November 11		Armistice
1922	November 13	Dom Ollitrault elected Abbot General Dom Smets elected Abbot Vicar	January 22: death of Benedict XV February 6: election de Pius XI
1929	February 25 July 16	Death of Dom Ollitrault Dom Smets elected Abbot General	Lateran Accord
1930	April – May July 27	First health problems 100 years since Saint Bernard was proclaimed Doctor of the Church	
1931	April 22 –June 24	Regular Visitations in North America	
1932	September	Dom Dütter, Procurator Dom Belorgey, Auxiliary Abbot of Citeaux	
1933	August 7 September	Accidental death of the Procurator Appointment of a Visitor for the Far East Creation of *Collectanea*	Hitler, Chancellor of the Reich
1934		Eighth Centenary of Saint Stephen Harding	Hitler, Reichsführer
1935	September 29 October	Death of Dom J. B. Chautard Generalate on the Aventine	
1936	September	Dismissal of the Abbot of Tamié, Dom Presse	Civil war in Spain First martyrs of Viaceli
1937		Assassination in China of Fr. Emmanuel Robial	War between Japan and China
1939	February 10 March 2 September		Death of Pius XI Election of Pius XII Beginning of World War II
1943	January 4	Death	

3.2.1. Dom Anselme Le Bail (1878–1956) Abbot of Scourmont 1913–1956

This article, by Armand Veilleux,[45] *published in French in* Collectanea Cisterciensia (63 [2001] 224–33) *and in English translation in* Cistercian Studies Quarterly (38 [2003]: 27–34), *is reproduced here with several additions and modifications to adapt it to the context of this chapter.*

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The years 1892 to 1914 were years of great spiritual vitality. It was the time of great conversions among men of letters: Verlaine, Bloy, Huysmans, Claudel, Péguy, Psichari, Massignon. In those same years, Bergson, at the *Collège de France*, rediscovered the heartfelt knowledge of mystics, and Blondel, reviving the approach of Augustinian ontology, taught that deification was the logical transcendence of every human action.

During that same time, several great abbots deeply influenced the orientation of our Order by rediscovering, if not the authentic Cistercian spirit, at least the spiritual and even contemplative dimension of the monastic life. We have presented several in the preceding chapters, namely Dom Lehodey (§ 2.4.1) and Dom Chautard (§ 2.4.2), who were personally involved in a movement of foundations in distant countries which heralded the great expansion of our Order a few years later. However, while these great masters had been nourished by a personal reading of the *Rule of Saint Benedict* and had acquired a certain knowledge of Saint Bernard, their contact with the Cistercian tradition proper was limited.

Between the two world wars, there was not only considerable numerical growth in the Order, but also a rediscovery of the Cistercian spirit, and the spiritual riches of the great masters of Cistercian spirituality were rediscovered, beginning with the abbot of Clairvaux. In this respect, no one was more influential in the Order than Dom Anselme Le Bail and the entire movement he engendered, a movement that was first spiritual and then intellectual.

FORMATION

Emmanuel Le Bail was born on December 31, 1878, in Brittany, which gave two Abbots General to the Order: Dom Ollitrault of Kéryvallan and Dom Dominique Nogues. His mother died two years later in giving birth to a child that would not

45 Dom Armand Veilleux has been the abbot of Scourmont since 1999, after having been abbot of Mistassini (Canada) from 1969 to 1976, of Conyers (USA) from 1984 to 1990, and Procurator of the Order from 1990 to 1998.

survive. Deprived of the tenderness of a mother, he was not deprived of all affection. After primary school, he began his Greek and Latin "humanities" at the minor seminary of Sainte-Anne-d'Auray in 1892. Six years later, wanting to be a missionary, he requested admission to the novitiate of the Holy Spirit Fathers. He received the habit on September 29, 1898, and made first profession for three years on October 10, 1899. But then he needed to fulfill his military service. He was called to serve at Lorient in his native Brittany. At his return he undertook his philosophy studies at the scholasticate of Chevilly near Paris, with an exam taken at the Sorbonne, then his theology studies. He received minor orders in July 1903; three months later he had to renew his vows for a period of five years, and advanced to the subdiaconate. But he hesitated. And because of his hesitations, the Superior General, Bishop Leroy, dismissed him from the Congregation. After a retreat at Timadeuc, he decided to go to Scourmont, without even saying goodbye to his family. Was it his missionary spirit that made him choose distant Belgium rather than Brittany? We will never know.

He knocked on Scourmont's door May 21, 1904, at the age of 26, and was admitted to the novitiate with the name of Br. Anselme. His novice master was Fr. Alphonse Bernigaud, who held this position until 1907. In 1905, Fr. Alphonse had the idea, which was original at the time, of using the Rule of Saint Benedict as a formation manual. Not having a great knowledge of it himself, he gave his novices homework on the Rule. Br. Anselme was captivated by this Rule and did his homework with great zeal. He filled a huge notebook, which was finished on May 10, 1906. He was thus in possession of a vast synthesis that he would continue to develop throughout his life as monk and abbot.

Ordained a priest on August 24, 1909, he was named master of the lay brothers and also of the novice lay brothers (their novitiate being distinct from that of the choir novices at that time) by his abbot, Dom Norbert Sauvage, who had recognized the innate talents of a formator in Fr. Anselme. He not only taught them the Rule but also liturgy, which was becoming one of the principle nourishments of his spiritual life. No one else at this time would have thought to teach liturgy to the lay brothers, unless it would be to give them a course in the rubrics. The young Fr. Anselme explained the liturgical cycles to them after the manner of Dom Guéranger, and the Sacrifice of the Mass. He composed a small manual for them entitled *The Divine Office of the Cistercian Lay Brother* (1910), where he presented the Office of the Paters and Aves as a veritable "prayer of the Church."

In 1911, he became master of the choir novices. He then took up his novitiate notes and produced a complete exposition of the doctrine of Saint Benedict from the very text of the Rule. At a time when almost everyone, including the monasteries, used Rodriguez for religious formation, Anselme Le Bail adopted the Rule

as a manual of formation for monks. He also formed them in liturgy, contemplative prayer, and the interior life. Dom Godefroid Bélorgey, who was his novice during the second part of his novitiate, delighted in saying that he owed his entire monastic formation, all his doctrine and great attraction for prayer and the interior life to Dom Anselme Le Bail.

During his two years as novice master, he put together a complete novitiate program and wrote two articles on "The Rule of Saint Benedict, Manual of Spirituality" and "The Liturgy in the Formation of Novices," which would be presented by Dom Norbert Sauvage at the General Chapter of 1913, during the retreat of the superiors at Cîteaux.

But this General Chapter of 1913 chose Dom Norbert as Procurator of the Order, which led him to resign as abbot of Scourmont. On Ocober 4, 1913, Dom Anselme was called to succeed him as abbot.

THE DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES OF HIS ABBACY

In order to estimate accurately what Anselme Le Bail accomplished in his community of Scourmont and in the Order as a whole, we have to keep in mind the difficult circumstances of his time in office.

Scarcely elected abbot, he was mobilized less than a year later and served as a military chaplain until April 1919. Throughout those years, he was continually in touch with the members of his community, several of whom were also serving in the army, and he continued their formation through a periodical he published on a regular basis, *Le moine soldat*. Scarcely two years after he came back to Scourmont, the Order entrusted him with a difficult mission in the Congo, where the abbey of Westmalle had founded the monastery of Bamania in 1894, and which little by little had become more a missionary congregation than a Cistercian monastery. This task kept him busy for a whole year[46].

Whether at Scourmont or away, Anselme Le Bail was the soul of his community. Throughout this period it continued to grow along the spiritual lines drawn by their abbot, faithful to his motto: *Abba, pater*. Under his leadership, the Scourmont community developed a spirit of its own, which generated both admiration and mistrust in the Order. Thus the General Chapter, while freely using Dom Anselme's talents and experience, did not fail to give him a slap on the wrist from time to time. At the General Chapter of 1930, he was strictly enjoined to preach retreats in Cistercian monasteries only—he had done so in several Benedictine monasteries—and not to absent himself from his monastery for more than twen-

46 See § 3.1.1, the section on this foundation in the Congo.

ty-four hours without the written permission of his Father Immediate, which permission was to be renewed for each journey. In 1937, he was ordered to remove the wash-basins that had been set up in the dormitory cells "against the tradition of the Order." In general, however, trust prevailed. Thus year after year he was one of the king-pins of all the commissions created by the General Chapter. In 1920, he was a member of a commission entrusted with helping the Definitory harmonize the Constitutions with Canon Law. In 1922 and for many years afterwards, he was a member of the Architecture Commission, which had to approve all the building projects in the Order. Also in 1922, he was a member of the commission set up to resolve the question of Westmalle's foundation in the Congo. In 1933, he was a member of the special commission for *Collectanea*, the review he held so dear and of which he was truly the father. From 1932 onwards, he was the secretary of the Liturgy Commission and in 1937, a member of the commission in charge of revising the *Usages* of the nuns.

Meanwhile, with the number of monks at Scourmont growing, Dom Anselme considered making a foundation. In 1926, he traveled to Spain looking for a favorable place, but in vain. In 1928, however, he agreed to assume responsibility for Caldey, a monastic island since the sixth century, recently abandoned by an Anglican monastic community that had converted to Catholicism. He led the group of founders there in January 1929[47].

Then came World War II. In 1939, following England's and France's declarations of war on Germany, twenty-four monks were mobilized. In May 1940, during the invasion of Belgium and the beginning of hostilities on the Western battlefront, all his monks under thirty-five were mobilized. Stoically, Dom Anselme stayed at Scourmont with about a third of the community, but eventually they had to leave the monastery, as it was occupied by German soldiers until the end of the war. Once again he published *Le moine soldat*, in order to continue his pastoral service to monks on the front.

Shortly before the war, Dom Anselme had seen a need for the Order to be open to dialogue with non-Christian religious traditions of the Far East, as had Fr. Henri Le Saux and Fr. Jules Monchanin. Fr. Monchanin, before leaving for India, had given a conference to the Scourmont community in the fall of 1938. Dom Anselme spoke with him at length and invited Fr. Albert Derzelle to join their conversation. They even agreed that Fr. Albert would join Fr. Monchanin in Tamil Nadu the following year, after studying Sanskrit in Paris for six months, in order to help him prepare a monastic foundation. Since Caldey Island was British, Dom Anselme felt it could be a step toward a foundation in India. The war, however,

47 Cf. § 3.1.1, the section on the purchase of the Anglican monastery.

put an end to this project, which was then replaced, so to speak, by the wave of foundations in Africa in the 1950s (Scourmont founded Mokoto). One of Dom Anselme's disciples, Fr. Francis Mahieu (Acharya), who had entered Scourmont precisely in view of making a foundation in India, took it upon himself to make this foundation, which, as Dom Anselme had foreseen, had to be made outside the Order. It was eventually incorporated into the Order in 1996, thus bringing it full circle.

These many activities did not prevent Dom Anselme from publishing *L'Ordre de Cîteaux—La Trappe* (Paris: Letouzey-Ané, 1924), as well as several articles on Cistercian spirituality, especially the very important article on Saint Bernard in the *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*.

ABOVE ALL, A FORMATOR

All this activity, important as it was for the Order, was secondary for Anselme Le Bail. It was merely a kind of outward reflection of his activity within his own community. He wanted to be the community's "father", but in full accordance with the great Christian tradition's use of the word. He was above all an outstanding formator, always concerned with Christ being born and growing in his community and in each single monk.

In an unpublished paper *La formation à Scourmont*, in the chapter dealing with Dom Anselme Le Bail's time as abbot, Fr. Colomban Bock enumerates nine characteristics of Dom Anselme's abbatial service:

1 Returning to Benedictine and Cistercian spirituality by teaching the *Rule of Saint Benedict*,
2 Returning to the purity of the monastic ideal of early Cîteaux by teaching Cistercian spirituality,
3 Reforming the study program and ushering in a monastic humanism,
4 Restoring the liturgy through teaching on the spirit of the liturgy and through study of Cistercian liturgy,
5 Setting up a program of monastic and priestly formation,
6 Establishing a monastic library adapted to these different objectives,
7 Appointing masters in spiritual matters and a group of qualified teachers,
8 Setting a balance between the requirements of obedience and the holy freedom of the children of God,
9 Calling for personal responsibility, respect of personalities, and encouragement of individual initiatives.

FORMATION OF THE COMMUNITY

In 1913, Fr. Anselme became abbot. There were several changes of novice master during the war, but after the war he appointed Fr. Godefroid Bélorgey as novice master, from 1919 to 1928. Under this extraordinary team of abbot and novice director, these were the golden years for formation at Scourmont. Dom Anselme continued to be actively involved in formation for the novices and for the entire community as well. Having "discovered" the Rule and the liturgy, he went on to rediscover the Cistercian fathers, especially Saint Bernard. Beginning in 1923, he introduced a course on Cistercian spirituality, giving one hour a week to the novices himself. From that time on, however, his major concern was monastic formation for the entire community.

The phrase "monastic humanism"[48] rightly expresses Dom Anselme's attitude and desire. He wanted all the monks of his community to behave as adults and to be eager to develop their own personalities. He wanted to teach them the art of reflection, how to think for themselves, how to enter more deeply into the meaning of Christian and monastic life and the requirements of their state in life. He wanted them freely to embrace the goodness of life, not out of fear, but in a total freedom and for the love of God. He wanted to be the *abba* who teaches, encourages, and enlightens, not the policeman who supervises and corrects.

His teaching was rooted in tradition, especially Cistercian tradition, for which he had a deep respect. This respect, however, did not prevent him from rethinking it by asking questions in a new light and stimulating intellectual curiosity and personal study. His high intellectual rigor led him to analyze a question or a situation thoroughly before evaluating the various elements and drawing up a synthesis. He also strove to develop in the monks of his community a rigorous critical sense. He sent several to higher university studies in Scripture, theology, and canon law, not out of mere intellectualism, but rather to lay the foundation on which to build an enlightened and open spiritual life.

He thoroughly studied any questions he dealt with. Thus, in his daily chapter talks for a period of nearly thirty years, commenting on the Rule, he spent two and a half years on chapter 7 and an equal amount of time on prayer.[49] His sermons (we did not call them homilies at that time) for solemn professions were veritable treatises of spirituality, often using a current event as a starting point. Thus in 1940, a few days before the invasion of Belgium, at the solemn profession of a monk, he publicly stated how to react if the war were to come. The sermon he

48 Phrase used by Fr. Colomban Bock, see above.

49 Rule of Saint Benedict, chapter 7, is on humility.

pronounced when his community was expelled from Scourmont in 1942, without knowing if they would return, is a true masterpiece.

A serious intellectual formation is impossible without a good library. Dom Anselme devoted all his energies to the creation of one of the largest monastic libraries in the Order, which counted all the great collections, such as the *Patrologia Græca* and the *Patrologia Latina*, Mansi's collection of the Councils, important dictionaries such as the *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, and the *Acta Sanctorum* of the Bollandists. Able to ask for help in this area as in others, he put various competent persons in charge of establishing the different parts of the library. Fr. Joseph Canivez was in charge of setting up the canon law section. Frs. Alphonse Bernigaud and Benoît Attout had charge of the Scripture section. For philosophy it was Fr. Ignace Van Vlasselaer, and for theology Fr. Thomas Litt.

He encouraged the publication of books by the most competent of his monks, especially the *Acta Capituli Generalis* by Fr. Canivez, a classic text used by all the historians of the Order at the time, which has not yet been replaced, even though it is now out of date.

As early as 1923, Dom Anselme conceived the idea of a collection of writings by the Cistercian fathers of the first centuries of the Order and proposed its publication. He had drawn up a precise and detailed plan of what could be a complete Cistercian *corpus*, many elements of which have not yet been published. The only publications resembling this project today are the large Cistercian Fathers series brought out by Cistercian Publications (a publishing house set up by the US Region) over the last thirty years, and Fr. Robert Thomas's Pain de Cîteaux series[50]. Dom Anselme's project was presented to the General Chapter of 1924 but was not accepted, being considered too intellectual. The periodical *Collectanea*, the publication of which was approved ten years later by the General Chapter of 1933, was a sort of compromise solution. Thanks to its first editor, Fr. Camille Hontoir, a monk of Scourmont, and Dom Anselme's close involvement, this periodical was immediately helpful in making the Cistercian fathers known and in generating desire to read them.

Even a brief resume of Dom Anselme Le Bail's formation activity would not be complete if we did not mention his untiring work for the formation of nuns in the monasteries under his care, Soleilmont and N.-D. de La Paix. He was personally involved in the transfer of the latter from Fourbechies to Chimay in 1919. Between 1928 and 1937, he was active in the formation of about fifty young girls sent by Dom Simon Dubuisson, the abbot of Tilburg and former monk of Scourmont, for

50 The important collection *Sources Chrétiennes*, at the initiative of some French monks, inserted into its program the publication of works of the Cistercian Middle Ages. In 1990 the complete translation of Saint Bernard was begun.

their formation at Chimay. On July 15, 1937, they left as a group to found Berkel. He also preached many retreats in other monasteries of nuns.

In the last years of his life, spent in a wheelchair following a stroke, he continued to form his community through his silent and prayerful presence, since the care of the community had been entrusted to an apostolic administrator, Dom Guerric Baudet, who became his successor in 1956.

DOM ANSELME LE BAIL'S HERITAGE

At Scourmont, we can feel Dom Anselme's presence and influence in every corner of the cloister. What about his influence in the Order as a whole?

The Order is indebted to him for the whole movement of *rediscovery* of our Cistercian fathers in the last three-quarters of the twentieth century. We might wonder, however, whether this movement has always maintained the direction Dom Anselme gave it and the spirit with which he inspired it. Dom Anselme knew how to combine great scientific rigor with an equal spiritual freedom and a deep spirit of prayer. Workshops on our Cistercian Fathers, which have become more and more frequent over the last forty years, cannot always be said to possess the same characteristics. Today the writings of our twelfth-century fathers are readily used for *lectio divina*, often without the preliminary effort of a serious study that would open their authentic meaning. As a result, these texts, a bit esoteric for modern readers, have been used in order to arouse pleasant religious feelings. Moreover, even though the writings of some of our Fathers have come out in critical editions of solid scientific value, not all publications about Cistercian writers have that same rigor. Most of them are no more than *fervorinos*, which Dom Anselme would not have appreciated in the least.

His method was different and much more demanding. His first step was to analyze the text itself as seriously as possible, even in a technical way, in order fully to understand the author's message, putting it in its historical and spiritual context. The second step consisted in an effort to reflect personally and to assimilate this message in a spirit of prayer. Finally, as a third step, rather than inculturating oneself to the past (the great temptation in current monastic formation), the method consisted of assimilating the spiritual vitality received from contact with the Cistercian fathers, in order continually to reinvent a Cistercian spirituality rooted (or "inculturated" as we would say today) in our current world. Dom Anselme's chapter talks for solemn professions are excellent examples of a monastic doctrine solidly rooted in tradition, but they also reveal a free spirit ever able to rethink—and daring to rethink—this tradition according to the context in which it is lived.

Dom Anselme Le Bail published little. He did however write a great deal, not in view of publication, but in order to assimilate everything he had learned from the Rule and the Fathers, and to prepare his classes for the community of Scourmont. Although he did not hesitate to write the article on Saint Bernard in the *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité*, at a time when the latter was not well known, and some other studies on Cistercian life, he never considered himself a writer by vocation. He was first of all a formator. All his activity was directed toward the formation of the monks of his community, whom he wished to be adults, impregnated with the Gospel, the *Rule of Saint Benedict*, and the Cistercian Fathers, living the tradition with freedom and lucidity in the world of today.

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3.2.2. Dom Edmond Obrecht and Dom Frederic Dunne: Abbots of Gethsemani (USA)

We here reproduce the pages Thomas Merton devoted to Dom Obrecht and his successor in The Waters of Siloe*, pp. 178–81; 211–18; 235–38. We have added a first paragraph to clarify certain dates at the beginning of Dom Obrecht's monastic life; a little farther on, we added mention of the missions he carried out in South Africa and Asia; and, last, we have clarified some dates and names.*

Dom Edmond Obrecht

He was born November 13, 1852, in Alsace, in the village of Stotzheim where, twenty years later, one of his cousins, the future Dom Fabien Dütter, was born. While still a seminarian he applied to enter La Trappe where he was admitted as a novice in February 1875, made simple vows on March 19, 1877, and, a little later, received minor orders. After a time at Aiguebelle, he was ordained a priest at La Trappe on September 19, 1879. His seven-year-old cousin, Fabien, who attended his first Mass, no doubt took from this moment the first seeds of his future vocation. Fr. Edmond was then sent to help out at Tre Fontane, a foundation of La Trappe. There he made his solemn profession on May 28, 1882. He served the Procurator of his Congregation in Rome for a time before returning to Tre Fontane in 1888. It was from there that he was sent to Gethsemani ten years later to become the superior at one of the darkest moments of this American community, two-thirds of whose members were lay brothers.

Dom Edmond had everything that Gethsemani needed. [...] He knew what the Rule and the spirituality of the Order meant. He understood chant, ceremonies, liturgy, canon law. He was a linguist, a cosmopolitan, a diplomat, a connoisseur of books and manuscripts. He combined dignity with authority and possessed a clear and powerful intelligence. He knew how to make decisions and get them carried out. He was a born abbot, a born leader, a born organizer. He was just the one to put things in order at Gethsemani.

The impact of Dom Edmond's powerful character upon Gethsemani was unimaginable. He burst into the big Kentucky citadel of silence and threw it wide open to the four winds. He flung himself vigorously into the task of cleaning out the mental dust and cobwebs that had been gathering in the community for two generations. He let out all the stuffy atmosphere of Dom Benedict Berger's system of penances and sanctions and let in the fresh air of a more sensible and vital—and more Cistercian—viewpoint. (Dom Benedict was abbot from 1861 to 1869.) Not

that Dom Edmund could not punish faults! His subjects were to find him in many ways as stern as Dom Benedict when occasion demanded. But there was something more human about him. Besides, he was a man whose large views extended far beyond the limits of a spirituality that sought only to crush and restrict human nature, as if there were nothing positive to follow mortification as its true fruit.

The troubled and disunited community at the end of the abbacy of Dom Edouard Chaix-Bourban, who replaced Dom Benedict Berger in 1869 and resigned in 1896, was at once fused together into a solid and vital organism under his tutelage as provisional superior. Its first act of gratitude was to elect him unanimously on October 11, 1898. The monastery entered into a more live contact with the rest of the Church in America. Relations that had become strained under Dom Benedict were more than patched up by an abbot who knew how to make friends.

The Jubilee celebrations, held a year late, in 1899, threw open the monastery to men who had never dreamed of coming there in the old days, and news began to spread that the Trappists were not so bad after all. The monks were really human beings, and the monastery was far better than a penitentiary for censured clerics. Wisely, too, the new abbot had a little book about the monastery printed. And so, Americans at large gradually began to recognize at least the possibility that happiness and a Trappist vocation were not incompatible.

Dom Obrecht was a man of big ideas. His mind took in the whole expanse of the world. He was always much more than merely an abbot of a community of monks hidden away in the woods of Kentucky. It was because he had been recognized as a great person that he had been sent to Kentucky in the first place. Several missions were confided to him. When the General Chapter became concerned about the evolution of the monasticism implanted in South Africa at Mariannhill, it was Dom Obrecht who was sent to take an account of the situation and eventually straighten things out. His knowledge of German was not the only advantage to this task. Dom Obrecht, who was assisted by his cousin, Fr. Fabien Dütter, assumed the administration of the colony for three years, but the situation was irreparable, from the Trappist point of view, and ended in the separation of Mariannhill from the Order in 1909. In December of 1912, he was in China to conduct the Regular Visitation of O.L. of Consolation, before rendering the same service to the Japanese communities in January 1913.[51]

As the years went on, Dom Edmond built up one of the finest monastic libraries in America. Its nucleus was the bequest of Monsignor Leonard Batz of Milwaukee, from whom the monks acquired some forty thousand volumes. They included Migne's Greek and Latin Fathers, sets of Saint Bernard, Saint Thomas and Duns

51 This paragraph was added to Merton's text; it takes up certain expressions again from page 172 of his work. On Mariannhill, see § 2.3.2.

Scotus. Dom Edmond acquired many incunabula and even manuscripts of Saint Bernard, and several ancient Cistercian liturgical manuscripts, most of them antiphoners, the best of which is twelfth-century work. Add to this such great names in monastic history as the renowned Benedictines Dom Martene and Mabillon.

But Dom Edmond did more than this to humanize Gethsemani. During his abbacy the bare, forbidding brick walls of the monastery were coated with a material which was intended to look like stone and did, indeed, mellow the outward appearance of the buildings. On the inside, a new cloister was built, the Church remodeled and redecorated and even embellished with stained glass windows. Although these are contrary to Cistercian tradition—in the twelfth century, abbots who put in stained glass did a considerable amount of fasting on bread and water, under penance from the General Chapter—nevertheless Gethsemani really needed something of the kind. Up to then the only way for the monks to fight back against the ferocious Kentucky sun was to daub the windows with white paint at the beginning of each new summer season. It was an expedient that bore fruit in a singularly depressing and unsightly shabbiness.

The year 1912 began with one of the most significant events in the history of Gethsemani Abbey. One quiet winter afternoon, just before the monks were due to go out to work, a column of black smoke was seen issuing from the roof of Gethsemani College. The alarm was sounded, and soon monks and students were fighting the fire—but with all too little success. By night, there was nothing left of Gethsemani College but a mountain of angry red embers still crowned with bitter-smelling smoke. When day dawned and showed the monks nothing but four stark fragments of brick wall standing black and grim against the winter sky, nobody mourned. Indeed, the whole thing was accepted in the monastery with grim satisfaction. The monks felt that God had done them a favor. He had purified their monastic life of something that almost amounted to a cancer. The history of the college had been nothing but a long record of troubles and even spiritual perils for the monks.

The college had been fairly popular among the Catholics of Kentucky, and warmhearted former students at once began raising money to rebuild the old school. However, Dom Edmond wasted no time in returning the contributions as fast as they came in. There was no further need of the school and no possible excuse for the monks to keep on trying to be educators. It had been necessary in the days that followed the Civil War, but this was the twentieth century, and Kentucky was now full of good schools. The Cistercians had their hands full living their Rule and following out their own arduous vocation, without shouldering duties of other religious orders.

The last tottering fragments of wall were pushed down, the rubbish was cleared

away, and a statue of Saint Joseph was planted on a concrete pedestal atop the hill where the college had once stood. It is a stocky, purposeful little statue. Saint Joseph seems to have taken his stand there with the Holy Child in his arms, and in his heart the single-minded intention of keeping the school from ever coming back. After all, Saint Joseph is the patron of the interior life. [...]

The 1920s saw Dom Edmond Obrecht's zenith at Gethsemani. The year 1924 was an unforgettable date in the abbey's history. The Triple Jubilee celebration was Dom Edmond's triumph. One of the jubilees was, of course, the diamond jubilee of the foundation of Gethsemani, which really came at the end of 1923. The celebration was postponed until the following spring and amalgamated with two of Dom Edmond's personal feasts: his fiftieth year as a Cistercian and his twenty-fifth anniversary as abbot of Gethsemani.[52]

In the depths of his expansive heart there was nothing Dom Edmond Obrecht liked better than a big, colorful celebration. In that sense he was definitely a man of his time, and the Triple Jubilee at Gethsemani was, more than anything else, an expression of the fact that the Trappists had caught up with their times and were willing to display some of the booming optimism that flooded the whole of America in the 1920s.

Gethsemani, in 1924, was the ideal size for a Cistercian community. Its eighty-one members were evenly divided between professed monks and lay brothers. There were only a handful of novices, it is true, but the community was just big enough to keep most of the members from being overworked, without being so big that the abbot could not keep his finger on everything that was going on. It was now a thoroughly homogeneous "American" community, although there were still many monks who had come from distant countries to end their days in Kentucky. Above all, it was a regular, industrious, serious community of men who worked willingly for an abbot who made them work hard; they gave themselves wholeheartedly to an obscure and grueling quest for sanctity in the silence and poverty and all the vicissitudes of Trappist life.

Perhaps the outstanding accomplishment of Dom Edmond's regime in the spiritual order was in bringing Gethsemani finally under the unchallenged dominance of Saint Therese of Lisieux and her "Little Way".

The Little Flower had had her devotees in the house since long before World War I. The undermaster of the choir novices, Fr. Anthony, was a monk from an aristocratic family in Holland. His father, Senator James de Bruijn, had been made a Papal Chamberlain by Leo XIII, and his sister was a nun in a contemplative order in Italy. It was she who sent the first copy of *The Story of a Soul* ever to enter the

52 In fact, Dom Obrecht had made his first vows 47 years before and he was in his twenty-sixth year as abbot. [Note added to Merton's text]

citadel of ruthless severity that was La Trappe of Gethsemani. From that time on, the spirituality of the little Carmelite saint, who has exercised such an influence in the Church in our times, impressed itself upon the spiritual élite of the Kentucky abbey, and especially upon its prior. Dom Edmond was interested, but his interest changed to enthusiasm when the newly canonized Saint Therese cured him of a dangerous illness in 1925.

Dom Edmond had gone, as usual, to the General Chapter but had been struck down by an almost fatal heart attack before the Chapter opened. He barely managed to find his way to his old family home in Alsace, where he was confined to bed for several months, unable even to say Mass. The illness of one so prominent was a matter of consternation to the whole Order, and a stream of abbots and dignitaries came to visit Dom Edmond in his native village. The Bishop of Strasbourg even made him an honorary canon of his cathedral. The local villagers, in their turn, came to serenade him with a brass band outside his window. But even that did not kill Dom Edmond!

As he lay in bed, too exhausted even to greet his visitors, he placed all his confidence in a relic of the Little Flower—a lock of her hair—which he kept over the head of his bed. When he got on his feet again, his first important journey was a pilgrimage to Lisieux.

Then he boarded the liner for America and finally reached Gethsemani. The monks had never expected to see him again alive. In fact, they did not know how fortunate they were. On his recovery Dom Edmond had tried to resign his charge, but his resignation was not accepted by the Abbot General.

The years that followed, 1927 and 1928, were both marked by pilgrimages to Lisieux and Dom Edmond Obrecht was no ordinary pilgrim! He not only entered the sacred enclosure of Carmel, armed with special permission from Rome, but he conversed with Saint Therese's three living sisters, cementing with them a warm and lasting friendship. And he not only became their friend; he was officially adopted into the family.

As a result, the Cistercians of Gethsemani and the Carmelites of Lisieux have become brothers and sisters in an especially close sense. The various feasts of each year witness an exchange of greetings and gifts and all the charming courtesies so characteristic of the daughters of Saint Teresa. Gethsemani has by no means suffered from this Providential exposure to the warmth and playfulness and finesse of the Carmelites, who so well know how to temper their austerity with good humor.

There can be no doubt that this warmth from across the ocean did something to thaw out the vestiges of chilliness that still lurked in corners of this big, bare Kentucky abbey. More than that, it was after Saint Therese was appointed *ex of-*

ficio novice mistress at Gethsemani that the astonishing flood of vocations began to come in.

Carmel's new saint had not ended her favors for Dom Edmond when she cured him in France in 1925. Eight years later, after an automobile accident near Gethsemani in which, by rights, everybody should have been killed in the head-on collision, Dom Edmond developed a gangrenous foot. It soon became so serious that the doctor feared he would have to amputate it. But among the abbot's other ailments there was a diabetic condition which made the operation impossible. The community began a novena to the Little Flower, and the father prior slipped a relic of hers into the bandage he put on the abbot's foot. The next day he walked in and found the doctor scratching his head and trying to work out some explanation for the fact that the old abbot was out of danger and his foot on the way to being healed. That was in 1933.

Dom Edmond's course was nearly run. Sleepless nights and a body full of pain left the aged Trappist without rest or strength, yet he insisted on going to the General Chapter and making an emergency visit to Our Lady of the Valley, where Dom John was seriously ill. Finally, as 1934 drew on, he had to be altogether confined to his room. His last appearance among his monks was typical. It was November 1, the Feast of All Saints. Dom Edmond came to the morning chapter to address the community, a thing he was seldom able to do in these last days. He made an important change in the officers of the community, and that evening he appeared for the last time in choir. He entered the church in the purple *cappa magna* granted him in 1929 by Pius XI, on the occasion of his golden jubilee as a priest. During the second Vespers of the great feast he sat in the choir of the infirm but stepped into his stall to give the blessing after the *Benedicamus Domino*. Then he remained to chant the Vespers of the Dead for the solemn anniversary of All Souls.

Two weeks later he received Extreme Unction, in his room, from the hands of the prior. He managed to live until Christmas and into the new year, but when the monks were entering choir for Prime at five-thirty on the morning of January 4, the prior beckoned them to come quickly to the abbot's room. The great man died with his monks around him, reciting the prayers for the agonizing.

Many of the Church dignitaries who had applauded Dom Edmond's wit at the Triple Jubilee banquet were once again at Gethsemani on the cold, rainy, January day when his body was lowered into the earth in a nook behind the chapel of Our Lady of Victories, in the apse of the abbey church where he had usually said Mass.

While the eddies of excitement were dying down in the Catholic press of two continents, the monks of Gethsemani prepared for the election of their fifth abbot. Early in February Dom Corentin Guyader, the Father Immediate, arrived

from Melleray, and the vote was taken with all the prescribed formalities. Not much balloting was required to choose as their new superior for life the man who had been Dom Edmond's prior for over thirty years, Dom Frederic Dunn.

Dom Frederic Dunne, First American Abbot

Dom Frederic Dunn, as we said, was the first American Trappist abbot. He was also, incidentally, the first American who came to Gethsemani as a choir monk and actually stayed there until death. In doing so, he buried many others who had entered the novitiate after him. Before his own life ended, full of years and merits, on August 4, 1948, he not only had seen more than half of Gethsemani's hundred years but had played a dominant part in his half of the abbey's history.

Dom Frederic had entered the monastery in 1894, when he was twenty. Physically speaking, he was not a very promising prospect. His build was slight, he was not tall or muscular. Dom Edward, who was then abbot, recognized at once the intelligence and religious fervor of his new postulant, who described himself in the monastery records as a printer and bookbinder. That was the trade his father had exercised, first in Zanesville and Ironton, Ohio, then in Atlanta, Georgia, and Jacksonville, Florida. While Frater Frederic was still a young monk, his father followed him to Gethsemani and spent the last years of his life in the habit of a lay-brother oblate. Mr. Dunne brought with him a small hand printing press and some type and everything needed to bind a book. During the course of his long and extremely busy monastic career, Father Frederic found time to bind many of the books in the library.

"Busy" is scarcely the word for his life. Dom Frederic's labors for the monastery were something monumental. The natural generosity of his soul and the intense nervous energy generated in his wiry frame are not sufficient to explain the persistence and the effectiveness with which he kept Gethsemani going, sometimes single handed, for so many years.

He entered the monastery at a crucial moment. The monks, ignorant of the English language or of the ways of the world or both, and divided among themselves in a community that was unbalanced and ill at ease, were closer to ruin than they realized. Dom Edward Chaix-Bourban quickly discerned the blessing that had come to his monastery in this intelligent and willing worker and it did not take him long to make use of him. He put Frater Frederic to work long before he should have done so. Even before the poor boy got well into his novitiate, he was appointed sacristan; and then he was barely professed when the whole house was turned upside down by the trouble at Gethsemani College, the public scandal sur-

rounding the arrest of the principal, Dom Edward's resignation, and the confusion that followed.[53]

It was young Frater Frederic who was sent up to the school to take charge of everything, to go over the books, to find out how much the ex-principal had managed to embezzle, and afterward to set things right and try to steer the school back into the proper spiritual and financial channels. It was not a bad assignment for a boy of twenty-two. But it was one that had its dangers. After all, the young monk was taken out of the community before he was fully formed. He had to live at the college, and he came down to the monastery only at rare intervals. He was a contemplative only in desire. The fact that he managed to preserve such an intense and ardent interior life all that time bears witness to the fervor and power of that desire! For, although he was at the same time one of the youngest and most overworked men of the house, Frater Frederic was also one of the most spiritual.

Underlying a natural courage and tenacity that could be pushed to the limits of heroism by his iron will, Frater Frederic burned with deep and smoldering supernatural fires, and his was the union of grace and temperament that produces Trappist saints. He was a Trappist in all the rigor of his love for the Rule, in all his uncompromising asceticism and love of penance; but he was more than Trappist in his ardent love of Christ, a love that had something of the fire of Saint Bernard and Saint Gertrude the Great. This love was the supernatural secret of his tireless devotion to Gethsemani and to all who have lived there in the last fifty years or have come within the radius of the Trappists' influence. And beyond that, his love went out to embrace the whole world, for this contemplative, like Saint Teresa of Avila, like Therese of Lisieux, had the soul of a great apostle.

All his life was centered upon the altar and Christ in the tabernacle. The Blessed Sacrament, the Sacred Heart were his contemplation. If his thoughts turned at every moment from his work to Christ on the Cross, it as only to return again to this unending immolation of work which was to consume his life in sacrifice. Father Frederic loved books and he loved prayer. He had no relish for society and for the business and functions of men. Perhaps few people ever realized how much it cost him to sacrifice so many hours and days in his long life to material things, to contact with the world, to conversation with others, and to errands outside the monastery.

Dom Edmond, of course, found him invaluable. He had him ordained as fast as he decently could and appointed him prior. After that, during Dom Edmond's long absences in Europe, Africa and Asia, it was Father Frederic who ran things

53 The principal at the college had brought on a financial disaster and drawn the monks into numerous difficulties. Conscious that he did not have "the wisdom of the serpent" necessary to face the situation, the abbot, Dom Edward Chaix-Bourbon, offered his resignation in 1895. [Note added to Merton's text]

at Gethsemani. Quietly, efficiently, without fuss or noise, submitting everything he could to the judgment of his abbot, Father Frederic found the secret of doing many jobs extremely well—and letting all the credit go to somebody else.

By the time he was elected abbot, he was thoroughly prepared to be not only abbot but everything else. All during his abbotship Dom Frederic carried out most of the functions of cellarer as well. Here again, it was a question of generous sacrifice. He knew how much it cost to go out and do business in the world, and he wanted to spare any one of his monks from such a trial.

The first American-born Cistercian abbot entered upon his new charge in an hour of severe trials. The Providence of God was evidently preparing him and his community for the years of hard work and expansion that were soon to come. On February 7, the day after Dom Frederic's election, several members of the community who had fallen ill with Spanish influenza had to be isolated. In spite of all the efforts of the local doctor, the contagion spread rapidly through the community. In a few days Father James Fox, the infirmarian, had half the community on his hands in the small monastic infirmary built years before by Dom Edmond. But the monks did not realize the danger of the situation until Father Columban and Brother Placid both died on February 15. While they were being buried the next day, Father Anselm died, an eighty-six year old Irish monk. More and more of the Trappists fell ill until finally only twenty were left standing to carry on the regular life of the community and look after the others. The infirmary was taking on some of the aspects of a pesthouse, and there seemed to be nothing anyone could do about it. Father Anthony died on February 18, followed by Brother Michael two days later. By this time the news of the epidemic was all over the countryside, and it was Bishop Floersh in Louisville who finally brought relief to Gethsemani. He appealed to Chicago for help, and two Alexian brothers were sent from their Chicago hospital to nurse the sick Trappists. Meanwhile, the monks were moved out of the infirmary into the top floor of the guest house, where the disease was finally checked, with the loss of one more patient, Brother Matthias. Later on two more died of pneumonia.

The Requiem Masses were sung over the bodies of all these victims by Dom Corentin—a sad task for a Father Immediate who had come to install a new abbot in his daughter house. For, while all this was going on, the regular visitation was also being held, and confirmation of the election arrived from Cîteaux. Those who were able to get around on February 18 knelt before their new reverend father in the chapter room and renewed their vows, promising him obedience until death.

However, weeks went by, and the monks were able to finish Lent in the usual rigor. May 1 saw the abbatial blessing of the new superior, and that September he attended his first General Chapter. [...]

Dom Frederic's view of life was at once tragic and optimistic. It was optimistic because the central reality of his life—a reality more real than anything else—was God's infinite love and mercy to men. It was also tragic, because he experienced, with an anguish so acute that it was physical, the terrible truth that most men have rejected that love and have preferred the confusion and misery of their own selfish ends—the fruit of which is suffering, cruelty, hatred, and war. Dom Frederic's view of life could not help being tragic, considering the tragic times in which he lived. But it could not help being optimistic, since he had consecrated his whole existence to a belief whose essential optimism finds the love of God in all things, even the worst, and keeps reminding us that the love of God turns evil into good. "*Omnia cooperantur in bonum iis qui diligunt Deum*" (Rm 8:28).

The fruit of this combination of tragedy and optimism was a life of strenuous effort, in which Dom Frederic dedicated himself entirely to the task of opposing evil with good, hatred with love, selfishness with sacrifice, and sin with reparation. His conception of the Cistercian life was dominated by this reparatory character, and the necessity of vicarious penance was to become, at last, almost the sole theme of his spiritual instructions. Although he was essentially a modest and retiring person, hating every form of fuss or excitement, Dom Frederic would positively blaze with emotion when he talked about the life of the monk *Christo cruci confixus,* nailed to the Cross with Christ—filling up in his own body the things that are lacking to the sufferings of the *Christus totus*.

Although he hated to leave the enclosure of the monastery and never stayed out a moment longer than was absolutely necessary, he had a very clear picture of the needs of the Church in America. In the years of depression and war the correspondence of the abbot of Gethsemani grew to tremendous proportions. Many people—priests and laymen—were writing to the monks to tell them how abjectly miserable life in the world had become and to ask for a share in their penances and prayers. When he had first entered the monastery, fifty years before, Dom Frederic Dunne had found few to sympathize with him in his intense conviction of the important role of contemplative orders in the Church. In fifty years there had been a considerable change, and even men who were not Catholics were beginning to realize that prayer and penance might perhaps be more fundamental and more valuable to the Church and to the whole world than the exterior labors of the apostolate.

In any case, this first American Trappist abbot had shouldered a task of tremendous importance and vast possibilities. The first thing he had done, on taking over the miter and crozier of his predecessor, was to make sure that all the austerities of the Rule and the Cistercian usages were observed as fully as possible at Gethsemani. The Kentucky abbey had always been one of the most austere in the

Order, in any case, and Dom Edmond Obrecht had certainly not allowed any mitigations which he did not feel were amply justified by the difficult climate. Dom Frederic Dunne began to retrench even upon these. Bit by bit and year by year the meals in the refectory dwindled down to their most rudimentary and naked essentials. The two fried eggs that had transformed each monk's Easter Sunday dinner into a banquet of unusual splendor, were relentlessly banished. The somewhat larger portions of corn-meal mush or oatmeal that made the evening collation, in time of fast, somewhat less microscopic, dwindled gradually to a few ounces of applesauce with a chunk of black bread, according to the usages. Even the wine or cider which are universally permitted in the Order disappeared from the table at Gethsemani forever and gave place to a strange concoction made of barley or soybeans, which went by the name of "coffee".

Far from resenting these changes, most of the monks were eager to see them intensified, and many went to Dom Frederic and pointed out that, in the old Cistercian usages of the twelfth century, there had been no such thing as collation at all: only one meal a day in time of fast, and no extras, not even a bite of dry bread in the twenty-four hours between dinners. To this, Dom Frederic answered that he would be delighted to keep the ancient fasts as soon as they were brought back into effect by the present General Chapter, with the approval of the Holy See. Until then, he would be content to enforce the strict observance of the usages now in force.

One somehow felt that the bare refectory of Gethsemani was Dom Frederic's pride. European abbots who visited arched their eyebrows at the rusty old tin cans in which the monks received their barley coffee, and they told one another that these rich Americans were certainly making an effort to practice poverty. [...]

Curiously enough, one of the immediate effects of Dom Frederic's austerity was a considerable increase in vocations. He had not been abbot a year when the great multiplication of novices began. When they were asked why they had come to Gethsemani, most of them replied that they were looking for the hardest kind of monastic life. They wanted to strip themselves of everything, renounce all the pleasures and comforts of the world, in order to make some faint gesture, give some slight token of the fact that they were trying to love God. Many of them did not find the Trappist life austere enough. They had to be held in restraint, taught moderation. Their attention had to be directed to the searching interior asceticism of the will and judgment in perfect obedience, in Benedictine humility, in the acceptance, above all, of the mysterious and crucifying interior trials with which God purifies the souls of those whom he destines for infused contemplation.

But the crowd of young faces, the enthusiasm and joy of so many energetic young monks in the first fervor of the monastic life, gave the abbey of Gethsemani

an atmosphere of vitality and happiness which it had not known in all its ninety-five years. Visitors were deeply affected by the current of joy that rioted through the veins of this great community—and by the contrast with the gloom of the world outside. Novices who weakened and forgot, for a moment, the strength of their resolutions and resumed their secular clothes to return to the world, soon regretted their decision, entered other monasteries or seminaries, or ran back, with all possible speed, to Gethsemani.

When he saw all this and recognized that it was not enough merely to enlarge the buildings and make room for crowds of postulants, Dom Frederic found himself close to the fruition of an ideal that was once thought impossible to realize. The time had at last come for the American Trappists to spread and build monasteries of their own and extend the power of their hidden apostolate all over the plains and mountains and valleys of the New World.

> *Thus began the era of foundations in the United States. The first ones, before the death of Dom Frederic, were Our Lady of the Holy Spirit in Georgia and Our Lady of the Trinity in Utah, while Our Lady of the Valley made a foundation in New Mexico.*

3.2.3. The Dom Alexis Presse Affair[54]

Mathurin Presse, a Breton from Plougenast, had entered Timadeuc at age nineteen in January 1903, after a year in the Major Seminary of Saint-Brieuc. He received the name of Alexis, which was popular in his family (his brother, father and grandfather bore this name). In the novitiate he rubbed shoulders with Br. Dominique Nogues, his elder by several years. Allowed to make first vows on February 11, 1905, and then solemn vows on February 16, 1908, he received successively, soon after, the three Holy Orders.[55] He was appointed sacristan and master of ceremonies, and already had the opportunity to show his love for the ancient traditions by advocating so-called gothic vestments rather than what was used at the time. He was also cantor and master of the lay brothers. In 1910 his abbot, Dom Bernard Chevalier, sent him to Rome to study. He obtained a doctorate in canon law in 1913, but stayed on at the Generalate as master of students.

54 The essential events, in spite of several mistakes in the details, have already been made public by X. H. de Villeneuve in his book *Boquen. Dom Alexis Presse*, published in September 1996, and thus are no longer a secret. Also, those concerned have all died and there is no longer any fear of stirring up latent negative feelings. In the context of this presentation of the Order in the twentieth century, it seems appropriate to give an accurate and objective overview of this affair, which was certainly painful in its time.

55 Subdeaconate, April 4, Diaconate, June 28, Priesthood, July 10.

It was the time when a rescript of the Holy See allowed the Order to update the rubrics of the Missal, taking inspiration from the former Cistercian Missal. Dom André Malet put him to work on the project, and he collaborated closely with Fr. Robert Trilhe, with whom he always stayed in close contact, even after Trilhe left the Order to give himself more to research in the various libraries of Europe.[56] Fr. Alexis, since the beginning of his religious life, was interested in the beginnings of the Order. His studies were valuable for the Order, especially when it came to drawing up the nuns' Constitutions in the 1920s. But he was not merely a historian, and dreamed of bringing his Order back to its original practices by sweeping aside all that had been added since then, especially since Rancé and Lestrange. Certainly the unification of the three Congregations in 1892 had already brought a more Cistercian balance to the observance, but there still remained much to do in order to regain the purity of the twelfth century. He sometimes heard the retort: haven't we made profession according to the 1893 Constitutions and not those of the twelfth century?

The declaration of war in August of 1914 caught him by surprise while he was on summer vacation from school. He had the sorrow of learning that his brother had been among the first to die in battle. He needed to go to Timadeuc to help fill in the holes left by those mobilized, and to take over the functions of cellarer and secretary. But he also was called up, even though he had only one good eye.[57] He was inducted as an infirmarian at Loudéac, a few kilometers from Timadeuc. In November 1917, he took advantage of being master of students in Rome and managed to obtain provisional exemption with the title "Director of Advanced International Studies." Thus he returned to Rome even if the war prevented the communities from sending students to the Eternal City.

Called home definitively to Timadeuc during the holidays of 1919 by his abbot—Dom Brieuc, who succeeded Dom Bernard, now abbot of La Trappe, and who was afraid that Fr. Alexis might cultivate dangerous ideas—he entered the common life again with manual labor in the fields, which depressed him a bit; he felt quarantined. Bishop Marre called him to Cîteaux in July 1920 to organize the move of the monks of Igny into buildings on the abbey grounds. Three months later, in October, he was loaned to Bonnecombe, where they needed a teacher. The abbot of this community appointed him sub-prior.

56 When Abbot Trilhe died, May 3, 1930, his brother inherited his library and put it at the disposition of Dom Alexis at Tamié. This library was sent to Boquen in February 1940, at the request of Edmond Trilhe and Dom Alexis.

57 Around 1894, he fell in a field that had just been harvested and a piece of stubble pierced his left eye.

Superior, then Abbot of Tamié

September 29, 1921, the abbot of Tamié, Dom Augustine Dupic, resigned because of poor health, leaving the community in a more than precarious situation. Recruitment had never been good,[58] and it had struggled for a long time with material difficulties, which were resolved only in 1919. The withdrawal from Tamié of monks from Grâce-Dieu and the closing of the refuge of Rueglo in Italy had allowed the community to reconstitute itself, but after the resignation of Dom Augustine Dupic, an abbatial election seemed impossible. There were only seven electors. One even wondered if it would not be better for them to join a more flourishing community. The prior was in charge during the interim but this could not last. On the suggestion of a monk of the community who had been a student in Rome, Dom Chautard, the Father Immediate, age sixty-five at the time, approached Fr. Alexis Presse as a possible superior, at least a temporary superior. He accepted and was installed on March 8, 1923.

> As for the material aspects [he wrote a month later to the Abbot General], the situation is relatively good; it could be very good with habits of order, economy, and a spirit of poverty—things that have been neglected here for a long time, unfortunately. . . . The regular life as well as the religious spirit and the spiritual level naturally reflect the detrimental conditions in which the community finds itself and the lack of formation. It is evident that good initial formation is lacking, at least to most in the community.

Certain personalities, too independent, should be made to tow the line . . . or sent elsewhere, which is what happened!

Dom Alexis was convinced that a renewal of Tamié was possible. To succeed, he needed to be assured of having sufficient time. He thus insisted from the start that the community proceed to an election, which would give its superior a certain authority. The community agreed with this, insisting on its rights to the Abbot General, even threatening to have recourse to the Holy See. But in high places they hesitated, not only because of the state of the community and its blackmail, always unpleasant, but also because of the personality of Dom Alexis. They knew he was very attached to his ideas, which were well known and not appreciated by all.[59] The Archbishop of Chambéry also insisted. The General Chapter curiously

58 From 1861 to 1923, 119 postulants had knocked on the door, but there were only 7 simple and 4 solemn professions, and none of these persevered, except two . . . who died shortly after their profession!

59 Dom Alexis was not blind to these opinions; he wrote about them to Dom Ollitrault on July 17, 1923.

thought that the community had lost its right to vote, seeing that it did not use it in time—but was that its fault? An indult from Rome was necessary. This was requested, but the Sacred Congregation responded on November 27 by only allowing Dom Alexis to be elected for a time not exceeding two years.

At the end of his first two years, Dom Alexis wondered if it would not be better for him to leave. The Father Immediate, for his part, as the date set by the Holy See was approaching, hesitated and wondered if he should propose that the provisionary mandate be prolonged, proposing the possibility of a fusion of Tamié with Acey. Due to a misunderstanding, the question of this fusion was not brought up at the General Chapter of September 1925 and Dom Chautard concluded that he should proceed to an election, which he set for November 25. The six voters elected Dom Alexis unanimously. The Archbishop of Chambéry conferred the abbatial blessing on December 15. The abbot-elect was assisted by Dom Dominique Nogues and Dom Anselme Le Bail, two Bretons! The Abbot General and the Procurator were unable to attend.[60] The ceremony was beautiful, but in the evening some guests had to stay behind: the snow that had fallen in abundance made it impossible to go down the hill in the bus they had rented. This gave occasion, wrote Dom Alexis, for a joyful evening with good stories and many pipes, cigars, and cigarettes!

The Rise of Tamié

The Archbishop of Chambéry wrote the Abbot General that the abbatial blessing marked the resurrection of Tamié. It was a reasonable assertion. Novices began arriving. Dom Alexis took over their formation. He was keen on studies, and furnished the library with basic texts.

> The bookshops of Paris and Dijon knew the address of the abbot of Tamié well. Always alert to interesting acquisitions, he succeeded in finding several very expensive manuscripts and numerous old books that had become rare. Thanks to its abbot, the monastery regained the influence it had held in former times. This was evident in the autumn of 1932, the year that marked the eighth centenary of the abbey. Exceptional celebrations, spread over three days, were organized. All important personages and faithful friends were invited. The ceremonies took place out of doors on the site of the first monastery, where several picturesque processions carried back and forth the noteworthy relics of its founder, Saint Peter of Tarentaise. With his ready

60 But as a gift, the latter sent the pectoral cross of Dom Bernard Chevalier, the abbot who had received him at Timadeuc.

pen, Dom Alexis retraced the stages of the monastery's history and published an abundantly illustrated souvenir album.[61]

The Savoy abbey had considerable influence in the area. The premises were restored and made more welcoming. The use of electricity began in 1926, which made life less rustic, and made it possible to install machinery. Daniel-Rops, future member of the French Academy, who was then a history professor at a secondary school in Chambéry, went to the abbey often and acknowledged that he owed his "conversion" to Dom Alexis. He showed his esteem and support for this monk until his death. On September 20, 1928, the church was solemnly consecrated, in the presence of 300 guests.

Dom Alexis continued his own research on the Cistercian tradition. He did not retract his ideas on the direction the Order should take. The General Chapter allowed him to republish the ancient Cistercian breviary. In the mind of the Capitulants, this work had historical interest, but for Dom Alexis, his goal was to propose that communities return to the old liturgy. He was saddened when he realized that no one wanted to do so, and he wrote of his pain to the new Abbot General, Dom Smets, begging him to reestablish these old customs at least for Tamié; but Dom Smets would not allow it. Not only did Dom Alexis want to restore former usages but he also advocated the rejection of the practices that had been added in the course of the centuries.[62] He allowed himself to suppress certain of these practices in his own community, such as Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament on feasts of sermon, on which point the 1930 General Chapter called him to order: all exemption from the Usages—which had just been published in a new edition—needed to be duly authorized. He wrote articles for journals, publishing them on his own authority, without going through the obligatory censorship of the Order. One of these articles in particular caused a great deal of annoyance: it was entitled "The Adventitious Observances of the Order of Cîteaux."[63] He wrote another article entitled "Did Abbot de Rancé Wish to Found a Particular Observance?,"[64] which provoked a reaction from Dom Smets at the opening of the following General Chapter.

Disquiet at Tamié: The Crisis of 1930

Certain monks in the community began to see that their abbot wanted to lead them down a risky path. Also, his stubborn temperament sometimes led to un-

61 Bruno-Jean Martin, *Histoire des moines de Tamié et de quelques autres*, Saint Etienne 1991, pp. 138–39

62 He went so far as to forbid the novices to visit the Blessed Sacrament.

63 *Revue Mabillon* 20 (1930): 225–41.

64 *Revue Mabillon* 21 (1931): 49–60. Dom Anselme Le Bail confided to him amiably: "I did not like what you wrote on Rancé, not at all. However, you know that I am not a Rancé fan. But when I hear him spoken of in such mocking terms, my esteem for this man is rekindled."

pleasant instances of harshness, loss of temper, and even violent reactions. "Try not to contradict him," Dom Dominique Nogues had warned, "otherwise you will make him ill." These instances did not escape notice.

A first crisis came at the Regular Visitation in May 1930. Dom Jean-Baptiste Chautard made several remarks to the Father Abbot based on complaints he had heard in the scrutinies. Dom Alexis took it badly. He refused to talk to the monks, and dismissed the prior, sending him to another community for seven months. A young religious who had the nerve to convey to him complaints heard from others found got a severe dressing-down. Some thought it would be good to ask the abbot's pardon for the pain they caused him, but something had shattered in the relationship between the seniors and the abbot, who felt betrayed. Dom Alexis did not have much good to say about his Father Immediate or the General Chapter that confirmed the Visitor's remarks in September 1930.

Dom Alexis went through a time of depression. His illusions were crumbling. Dom Anselme Le Bail, his friend, tried to comfort him, saying that an abbot should govern in the midst of contradictions, while showing respect for persons.[65] But shortly before the next General Chapter, after another Regular Visitation had acknowledged the disquiet (July 12–31), he asked the prior to read to the four youngest solemn professed on August 15, 1931, a long declaration in which, on one hand he apologizes for his behavior at Tamié, and, on the other, shows his discouragement, announcing his intention to resign. These admissions reveal a great deal about his ideas, his proposals, and also his disillusionment:

> At that time (on arriving in 1923) my only thought was to make a regular and fervent house of Tamié, but without any pretensions. My ideas on this point became clearer and took another turn when I believed that God was sending me subjects capable of realizing great things. For a long time, almost since my entrance into the monastery, I dreamed of a restoration in the Order:
> – disciplinary restoration through a return to the former Cistercian program: the entire Rule of Saint Benedict and that alone.
> – ascetical restoration by the elimination of the modern methods introduced legitimately in the Church but adapted much more to the needs and behaviors of modern religious institutes than to the necessities and aspirations of the ancient Orders that are so different in spirit and manners.
> – finally, liturgical restoration by the use of the ancient Cistercian Ritual.
> I have cherished, studied, and turned these matters over and over in my

65 He advised him to abandon his mocking tone and caustic style, which was acrimonious and unconvincing, and to stop ridiculing his predecessors in the Order, as if they were all blind or deaf.

> mind during these many years; I prayed much, consulted much, and looked everywhere to clarify the means and the end. Placed in circumstances totally independent of my will in an exceptional situation . . . obliged to notice each day the manifest will of God, how could I have not been tempted to believe that God had put me there to try to bring to fruition the great plan. How could I not have been led to believe that He had Himself disposed everything to furnish me with the means to do so, and that at the right time he would give me the right building materials by sending me choice vocations?

He fell from on high, understanding that not only the largest part of his community, the part that he believed to be healthiest, did not follow him, but also that the Visitor was on the side of those who disagreed with, rather than supported him, who was part of God's design. In the beginning he thought that only two or three had instigated the revolt, hence his strong reaction against them. He now had to face the facts. But to return to the beaten track of the observances then practiced in the Order no longer interested him, he said in his August 15 manifesto. He concluded his statement, saying he was considering withdrawing. Distraught, several monks, among whom were the former and present prior, wrote alarmist and disapproving reports to the Abbot General and the Capitulants, asking them to intervene. For his part, Dom Alexis sought support from the clergy. The Archbishop of Chambéry wrote a letter to the Abbot General at the opening of the General Chapter, praising the actions of the abbot of Tamié, and asking the Chapter not to reprimand him "on the basis of the reports of a Visitor who was opposed to his election from the beginning, and whom everyone knew had little liking for him."

Having read the file and listened to the Father Immediate, since Dom Alexis was no longer proposing his resignation, the vigilance commission suggested sending two extraordinary visitors, who would try to restore peace to the community. Dom Alexis signed a paper that was presented to him: "I am very sorry for what could have been excessive in the manifestations of my zeal, in order to reestablish the primitive rites and observances of our Order. In particular I am sorry for having written in the *Revue Mabillon*, the article entitled "The Adventitious Observances in the Order of Cîteaux." I affirm before God that I am willing to obey all that the General Chapter has decided and will decide."

The two Visitors, the abbots of Tilburg and Port-du-Salut, arrived at Tamié as soon as the Chapter ended. They saw that all wanted peace and loved their abbot, even those who had been against him, and who came to embrace him before the Visitors. But he had to stop criticizing the authorities of the Order in public and be

a little more cordial in his reactions. He seemed resolved to follow this advice, and the Visitors made note of it, but they also wondered if he really understood what had happened, and if he had truly changed his convictions. Everyone seemed to have made a fresh start. At the end of the year, the prior could reassure the abbot of Port-du-Salut, one of the two September Visitors: "The truly miraculous change continues and grows stronger." This new state of affairs seemed to continue during the following years, even though Dom Alexis changed the prior, Fr. Alphonse Denis, in June of 1932. Dom Alexis was received into the Academy of Science, Art, and Literature of Dijon on December 16, 1931. His acceptance speech on the origins of Cîteaux did not please several abbots when they heard of it, but at the 1932Chapter they received a sharp retort from the author of the conference, who was a bit exasperated at the systematic criticism of certain abbots. However, following an article written in *Vie spirituelle* in 1932,[66] he had to sign a promise to publish nothing in the future without the authorization required by the General Chapter. All the same, he had not lost the confidence of the majority of the abbots. He was still a member of the liturgy commission, and at the Chapter of 1933 he was asked to do an extensive study on the monastic crown. He was put on the committee in charge of starting the Order's review, *Collectanea*, and responsible for its censorship.

As for the life of the community, it was peaceful. In his minutes of the Regular Visitations, Dom Chautard noticed the improvement: "There is peace, liveliness, zeal . . ." (1933), "A fervent community: spirit, generosity, zeal for the Divine Office, admirable devotion, perfect obedience . . ." (1934), "much fervor in choir and at work in this community! The brothers are obedient to whatever the RF Abbot asks in every area. In sum, a general fervor. A little more formation to mental prayer and guarding the heart would not hurt" (1935). Speaking to the General Chapter, he felt obliged to recognize a threefold miracle at Tamié: the abbey was back on its feet on the material level, on the level of recruitment, and on the spiritual level.

New Development in 1935: Dom Alexis' Dilemma

But had Dom Alexis abandoned his plans? Surely not! On many points, he was not wrong, and some of his ideas were adopted in the Order after the Council. At the same time, by categorically rejecting everything that was introduced in the course of the centuries, Dom Alexis' approach was overly archeological. Had

66 "Une école de sainteté chez les Cisterciens," *Vie Spirituelle*, Supplément, September 1, 1932, pp. [94]–[106]. The special form of Cistercian spirituality "seems to be to use integrally all the means of sanctification and every method of perfection furnished by the Rule of Saint Benedict, and exclusively these means and this method."

the Holy Spirit inspired nothing good in the Church since the sixth century? Our Fathers themselves had introduced new practices in the twelfth century. But in the 1920–1940 period, there was as yet no Council to change the mentality of the time. Moreover, in the Order, uniformity among the various monasteries was carefully guarded, and consequently authority was given to the General Chapter to safeguard this uniformity. Dom Alexis must have been aware that he could not make the General Chapter share his point of view—especially since his very scornful way of judging his peers from the height of his competence in matters of law and history did not constitute a good *captatio benevolentiae*. He could not even rally the support of his community. If he was unwilling to give up his desires for restoration, what other choice did he have than to plan and carry out an experiment outside the Order?

This is what he finally resolved to do. But, on one hand, he could only count on several young monks who were totally devoted to him, but who, alas, could not live up to his hopes; and on the other hand, in order not to alarm the community or the authorities of the Order, he had to act as discretely as possible. For safety's sake, he wanted to have the direct support of the Holy See, and had been working to obtain it since 1933. This attempt is what finally ruined him, because he was accused of dissimulation and disobedience in wanting to act without the knowledge of the Order's authorities and in spite of them. On the other hand, since he still hoped for support from the Holy See up to the very end, he resolutely held on, and would not give in. He learned too late that no support was forthcoming. All of these factors kept him from adopting an honorable and peaceful solution.

On December 23, 1935, he asked the Abbot General if he could spend two or three weeks at Frattocchie to improve his health and do some research in the libraries. The Abbot General suspected nothing and gave the permission. But he received a letter from Dom Dominique Nogues, abbot of Timadeuc since 1922, who had just learned by public rumor that Dom Alexis was getting ready to move to the ruins of Boquen, which his family had purchased four years earlier. The rumor was confirmed by the Bishop of Saint-Brieuc. If Dom Alexis wanted to go to Rome, it was to contact the Roman Congregations and obtain the permission of the Holy Father. The Generalate was utterly astounded. Dom Smets gathered some information, made inquiries at the Congregation for Religious, which disapproved of the foundation, and, while allowing Dom Alexis to coming to Italy to improve his health, he forbade him from taking any steps having to do with his project.

Dom Alexis, slightly embarrassed, responded that he had every intention of speaking of all this with the Abbot General at the time of stay in Rome. He was offended to see that he was condemned before being able to explain. And he ex-

plained that, in fact, he had at Tamié several young professed who did not want to stay because they had another ideal, that of missionary-monks, like Fr. de Foucauld, and he had thought it a good idea to help them settle at Boquen. But in a letter to his friend, the abbot of Désert, Dom Malet, whom he had invited to his triple jubilee of April 29, 1936, he explained that the project of these young monks was to keep the Rule with no additions, and to follow the Cistercian Ritual. This plan was too close to Dom Alexis' ideas not to think that he was the instigator of the so-called initiative of the young monks, and that it was his own project that he was pursuing through them.

The Epilogue of 1936

Despite this incident, the activities of Dom Alexis continued. The Congregation of the Propagation of the Faith received a request from several monks of Tamié to found a seminary, under its dependence, that would form monks for mission countries. The Congregation asked Dom Smets about it on March 3, 1936. The latter answered with a long report, and the Congregation passed the matter on to the Congregation for Religious. On July 10 Dom Alexis sent a long private letter to the Congregation—to avoid having to go through the Procurator—in which he explained all his views on the burden of the adventitious observances of the Order and the necessity of returning to the purity of the Rule. He asked to be allowed to restore his abbey in this way, either by leaving with several young monks who wanted to follow him, or, if that was not possible, to live the rest of his life as a hermit somewhere. At the Congregation, in a conversation with a Definitor, Dom Léon, this letter was made known, and it was said that it was up to the Order to respond. If the Order did not consent to this foundation, and Dom Alexis still wanted to found something new, well, let him ask for a dispensation from his vows.

It would have certainly been better if a friendly private arrangement could have been made. Since Dom Alexis wanted to make his foundation, why not follow the way indicated by the Congregation? Dom Alexis could have left on his own without causing such a scandal. But, alas, he did not know about this spoken response from the Congregation.[67] Still hoping that the Holy See would allow his project to happen at Tamié, or at least give it its blessing, he held onto his hopes

67 As the request did not go through the Definitory of the Order, it was left to the Congregation to send him a reply, without informing him of the conversation between the secretary and Dom Léon. The written response was dated August 31, and addressed to the Procurator. It was only transmitted to Dom Alexis during the General Chapter of 1936, when he was called to present himself at the plenary session for the third time. He would not have time to react and opt for the better solution. The process for his deposition was already underway. See in the appendix to this chapter the account of his new Father Immediate, Dom Marie Godefroy, abbot of Sept-Fons.

to the end, whereas the authorities of the Order knew that the Holy See did not support him.

At Tamié, apart from the four young monks led by the abbot, no one suspected anything.[68] Also the Visitor, the new Father Abbot who succeeded Dom Chautard after his death in February 1936, said nothing about it in his Visitation Card. But at the General Chapter people were aware of the situation, and things needed to be clarified. Dom Alexis felt it coming, and asked the Holy See to dispense him from going to Cîteaux. The request was refused, and he was convoked by telegram, arriving when the Chapter had already begun. At the Chapter he stayed in his room. Everything in the dossier had been read in plenary session, and they went to look for Dom Alexis so that he could present his defense, but he refused, preferring first to be heard by a small commission. In vain the Chapter asked him twice more to make an appearance,[69] after which it declared Dom Alexis to be dismissed from his abbatial charge by a vote of 34 out of 37. Dom Alexis announced his decision to appeal the sentence to the Holy See. Wanting to avoid Dom Alexis' returning home and convincing the youngest monks to leave with him, the Chapter forbade him to go to Tamié, and asked him to go to another house of the Order. But he said he had to put his desk in order and get papers from there to prepare his appeal to Rome; he also said that this appeal suspended the condemnation and prohibitions given by the Chapter. In addition, they were celebrating the seventy-fifth anniversary of the recovery of Tamié on September 20 in the presence of several bishops of the region; could he not be allowed to preside at the celebration? He promised to leave quietly on September 25. He waited in vain for an answer to his proposal: the two abbots sent from the Chapter to the community of Tamié, the Father Immediate and the abbot of Tilburg, were already en route.

In the evening they sadly announced the abbot's dismissal to the monks. Dom Alexis arrived two days later in the morning while the community was singing the conventual Mass, but he could not enter his office because the door was sealed off. He was met by the two abbots, who finally accepted that he could take the papers he was looking for from his office. They also let him take 5,000 francs, and invited him to dinner, but Dom Alexis was not at all hungry; he refused and left, going to a community of Bernardines near Annecy. On September 28, withdrawing his appeal to Rome, he asked for an indult of secularization with incardination in the

68 No one realized that boxes were accumulating in a room near the abbot's office, where vestments, candelabra, and chant books were piling up. The Father Immediate discovered them after the departure of Dom Alexis, September 16, 1936.

69 The Chapter, at this time, only lasted several days, and if the request of Dom Alexis had been granted, it was thought that there would not be time to conclude the matter. And what more could a small committee do? Everything seemed to have been already said and known, and everyone knew that Dom Alexis was not inclined to change his mind, in spite of his good word. The time had come to lance the abscess.

diocese of Annecy, which was quickly given to him. It was understood that the Bishop would let him go to Boquen, and he arrived there on October 11. But he was alone. He was soon joined by Fr. Benoît Niogret, simply professed since December 8, 1932, who would support him for nearly twenty-five years.[70]

The bishops of Annecy, who were not at all interested in questions of observance and discipline in the Order, were devastated and indignant, since Tamié was so well known. Dom Alexis was seen as a victim of the settling of scores between high-ranking personalities who did not get along. At Tamié, the community reacted well; there was nothing to fear from the seniors, but certain temporary professed were quite tempted to join Fr. Alexis at the end of their vows, which justified the severity of the decisions made by the General Chapter.

The Aftermath

Once Dom Alexis was secularized, his work no longer involved the Order. However, the Father Immediate of Tamié, in order to try to dissuade the young monks, reasserted that the Holy See did not back this undertaking. To follow Dom Alexis would be to disobey, and could only lead to an impasse. But what about the fact that the bishops of Brittany encouraged the project, and that even the Holy See finally gave its blessing?[71] Would not the community of Tamié say that it had been misled? These questions explain, but do not justify, the way Dom Smets decided to react in light of the encouragements that Dom Alexis was receiving. On July 29, 1937, important celebrations took place at Boquen for the eighth centenary of its foundation, presided over by several bishops, among whom were bishops from Savoy. Dom Smets addressed a complaint to the Congregation for Religious. Rightly so, the accused bishops responded that they were free to approve and support whomever they wanted. They took advantage of the situation to say how indignant they were at the measures taken against Dom Alexis, and even more at the rancor with which the Order seemed to be harrying it outlaw. The bishop of Saint-Brieuc even listed all of Dom Alexis' grievances against the Order's attitude toward him. The Congregation recommended that Dom Smets leave matters as they stood, and not insist. Dom Alexis, however, wanted the 1937 General Chapter, before confirming the Acts of 1936 Chapter, to ratify his complaint against the non-canonical nature of the measures taken with respect to him. This request was

70 He did not make his solemn profession at the end of 1935, already thinking of Boquen. Born on June 6, 1899, he was an engineer when he entered Tamié at age thirty-one. He supported Dom Alexis effectively until the time of his retirement in 1960. After some time, Fr. Benoît would go to Boulaur to be chaplain for the community.

71 The Holy See disapproved of his project as long as Dom Alexis remained in the Order. Once he left, there was no longer any reason to oppose it. History would show, however, that Dom Alexis' undertaking did not turn out the way he expected.

granted, but nothing more. He claimed to have been expelled from the Order, a claim that has often been repeated. The Chapter, however, had only deposed him as abbot. But since he was being forbidden to carry out his project within the Order, as long as he was not willing to forego it, implicitly, his only remaining option was to leave.

Later, after the war, certain members of the Order, especially the abbots of Timadeuc, renewed fraternal contacts with Dom Alexis and went to Boquen. He himself visited certain monasteries. He was even received at Tamié. He was invited to Cîteaux in 1953 to the celebrations of the eighth centenary of the death of Saint Bernard, and had the opportunity of meeting the Abbot General, Dom Gabriel Sortais, several times. It was at Timadeuc that he celebrated his monastic Jubilee. Obviously, the Order was not opposed to Boquen being incorporated into the Cistercian Order of the Common Observance in 1950, even though it took offence at the accusations Dom Quatember, the O.Cist. procurator at the time, made against the Order. However, in 1948, learning that the Congregation for Religious had recognized Boquen as "Cistercian," our Procurator explained the pain of the Order in the face this gesture, which could discredit the decision of the 1936 General Chapter. Also, later on, Dom Gabriel Sortais refused to be associated with the commemorative book published in 1958, *The Message of Monks of Our Time*.[72] But at the consecration of the Church of Boquen, August 22, 1965, which marked the fulfillment of Dom Alexis's restoration project—he was then hemiplegic and died the following November 1—the abbot of Timadeuc was present. He also attended Dom Alexis' funeral along with the abbot of Tamié.

APPENDIX

Exerpt of the testimony by Dom Marie Godefroy, abbot of Sept-Fons, on the events of the 1936 Chapter (Account given to the Procurator of the Order on September 29, 1947).

"The report of the General Chapter is absolutely exact. I am simply adding the following details:

The R. F. of Tamié had at first decided not to come to the General Chapter. It took an urgent summons to convince him to go to Cîteaux. But he did not attend the meetings and remained in his room.

72 This book was sent to him with a dedication by Daniel-Rops. Dom Sortais thanked the latter, but wrote to Dom Alexis, denouncing and refuting certain remarks of the Academician regarding our Order. Dom Sortais had always wanted to maintain a respectful attitude toward the person of Dom Alexis, but he believed he should defend the Order's honor regarding the events of 1936.

Our first two envoys sent to him met with a refusal. He did not want to appear before the General Chapter because he would be obliged to tell certain truths that would be very difficult for some and he was afraid that the Chapter would become upset; he asked that a commission be appointed before which he would answer questions.

The third mission *where I had to convey to him the response from Rome* was devastating for him. He had requested three things: 1) that he be allowed to carry out his project in his abbey of Tamié, even if it had to be separated from the Order; 2) if the response was unfavorable, that he be allowed to take with him those of his religious who would consent to follow him, and to found with them a new community outside the Order; 3) if this would not be granted, that he be allowed to leave the Order.—To these requests, the S.C. simply answered: "Haec petitio admitti nequit".

Faced with the failure of his projects, poor A.P. was shocked. I believed that it was the moment to appeal to his supernatural spirit, and told him with all the urgency that I could, that this would be a way for him to be honored before the Chapter and to obtain God's blessing, to come before the Chapter humbly and declare that since Rome did not approve of him, he would renounce all thought of reform. In spite of everything he refused and obstinately remained in his room.

It was then that the Chapter pronounced against him the verdict related in the official minutes. Note that the verdict was his deposition, and not, as he said later, an expulsion from the Order. If he left the Order, it was because he freely requested and obtained an indult of secularization.

We were then mandated, Dom Simon of Tilburg and I, to go to warn and if possible save the community of Tamié. We left as soon as we could. It was necessary to arrive before Dom Alexis. If he had arrived before us, the poor community would have been lost to the Order, so great was the hold he possessed on the entire young section of the community [...]".

SECTION THREE: THE EXPLOSION (1939–1951)

CHAPTER FOUR

The Trials of the War and Its Aftermath

4.1 THE ORDER AND THE ORDEAL OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

> *We evolve plans for disarmament and for the peace of nations, and our plans only change the manner and method of aggression. The rich have everything they want except happiness, and the poor are sacrificed to the unhappiness of the rich. Dictatorships use their Secret Police to crush millions of men under an intolerable burden of lies, injustice and tyranny, and those who still live in democracies have forgotten how to make good use of their liberty. For liberty is a thing of the spirit, and we are no longer able to live for anything but our bodies. How can we find peace, true peace, if we forget that we are not machines for making and spending money, but spiritual beings and children of the Most High God? [...]*
>
> *Yet there is peace in the world. Where is it to be found? In the hearts of men and women who are wise because they are humble, humble enough to be at peace in the midst of anguish, to accept conflict and insecurity and overcome it with love, because they realize who they are, and therefore possess the freedom that is their true heritage. (Thomas MERTON,* Monastic Peace, *Abbey of Gethsemani 1958, pp 3–4)*

The Second World War was a profound and painful trial for all the communities of the Order: for those who were directly affected by the destruction they suffered, and for all, since they were cut off from communication with the Order's center. For the houses more or less implicated in the war, it was a question of living for several years in insecurity and material precariousness, under the pressure of fear and the threat of evacuation, search, or expulsion. For those who were sheltered from actual warfare, there was rationing of food, gas, and other necessities.

Fidelity to the Divine Office was fairly universal, even if it was celebrated in

cellars, under bombardment, in monasteries crowded with refugees, enemy or Allied soldiers, or by communities reduced to the seniors, or, just the opposite, augmented by persons coming from other monasteries in greater difficulty. As Saint Paul says, "We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed, perplexed, but not driven to despair, persecuted, but not forsaken, struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies." The monasteries became places where people could find peace, prayer, and a warm welcome, even in wartime.

Accounts written by the communities after the war generally report a feeling that they enjoyed special protection. "Everything happened under the obvious protection of Providence," Cîteaux noted. Each monastery experienced this protection in its own way. For some it came from the Blessed Virgin, mediatrix of all grace. For others it came from the Child Jesus (Maubec), Saint Joseph (Gratta, Tegelen, Mont-des-Cats), or the Guardian Angels (Ubexy). Aiguebelle entrusted itself to the Holy Family, and was protected by them. Sept-Fons and la Trappe experienced the protection of the Blessed Virgin, and, as a gesture of thanks, erected a statue of Our Lady of Trust. Achel made a vow to put up a monument in honor of Saint Benedict, its patron, if the community survived the war unscathed. Other communities expressed their gratitude in the same way: Mont-des-Cats placed a statue of Saint Joseph in the center of the cloister.

4.1.1 In the Face of Hitler's Germany and Its Allies

MOBILIZATION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES

On September 3, 1939, in response to Germany's invasion of Poland, both France and England declared war on Germany. There immediately began a general mobilization, which especially affected the youngest French and Belgian monks (for the Belgians, beginning in May 1940), thus turning the life of their communities upside down. In certain larger communities as many as thirty or forty monks were mobilized. It is easy to guess the disruption these events caused in community life and in the industries that supported it.

Dom Herman-Joseph Smets, Abbot General, wrote a letter from Westmalle to those who had been mobilized, dated the second Sunday of Advent, 1939. It brought moral support to his sons, and gave them some advice: remain men of prayer, practice "custody of the senses," choose your friends well, be apostles, and maintain as much contact as possible with your superior and community. To this effect Cîteaux published a "Petit journal," and Dom Le Bail took up again the review that he had published formerly during the First World War: *Le moine soldat*.

One can estimate that around 350 monks were mobilized as Allied troops. Other monks were drafted on the side of the Germans (seven from Oelenberg and two from Achel; doubtless several from the German monasteries). Of these, about fifteen did not return, killed in action. To these victims we must add those killed in bombings (at least five persons), and the victims of extermination or concentration camps (around fifteen including the Löb family of Jewish origin: the three brothers and two sisters of Tilberg and Berkel),[1] as well as the two monks of Dombes killed during a search by the Gestapo. In all, there were nearly forty deaths linked directly to the war, not to mention the premature deaths of the sick or aged, resulting from the privations forced on them by the circumstances.

The beginning of the hostilities was rather calm. Instead of attacking western Germany and thus bringing help to Poland, which was the reason that England and France declared war, the Allied troops remained inactive, behind the Maginot line, not daring to engage with troops on the Siegfried line. But on May 10, scorning their neutrality, the German troops invaded Belgium, Luxembourg, and Holland, and then attacked France, which was quickly defeated, signing an armistice on June 17, 1940. Belgium had accepted an armistice the preceding May 28.

ON THE ROUTE OF THE INVADERS IN 1940: EVACUATION AND BOMBARDMENT

The monasteries acted quickly. Some managed to evacuate their more fragile senior and sick members, at least temporarily. They joined the disorganized cohort of numerous "refugees" that blocked the roads. The sixty nuns of Igny took eight days on foot or in carts to get to their founding community of Laval, at times sleeping on the side of the road. The monks of Westmalle went to Saint-Sixte, then, along with their hosts, moved on to Steenbrugge. The communities best situated for taking in refugees were those in the west or south of France, who seemed furthest from the front. It is thus that Désert received the monks of ten communities, and Aiguebelle nine. Neiges opened its doors to the monks of seven communities. Sept-Fons, Dombes, Timadeuc, and others also offered hospitality. The nuns of Chimay joined with Bonnegarde at Sainte-Anne-d'Auray.

Miraculously enough, the monasteries suffered little damage from these first combats. It was otherwise for Oelenberg and Tegelen in 1944–1945, a subject we will return to later. A dozen shells struck Orval in May of 1940, but without grave consequences, whereas neighboring towns were destroyed. Ubexy escaped with a fright when the abbey was under fire between two camps on June 20, 1940. This happened again in September of 1944. At Mont-des-Cats, a shell pierced the vault

1 See the chapter on the Martyrs of the Twentieth Century in volume 2.

of the church in May of 1940, and another came through the roof of the novitiate. Several months later a cyclone enlarged the hole in the vault of the church and tilted one of the towers of the façade. The vault was repaired so that the church could be used again on August 15, 1943.

THE MONASTERIES MOST AFFECTED BY THE GERMAN OCCUPATION

In general, the 1940 evacuation lasted only several weeks or months. Everyone then returned to his or her place of origin. Sometimes, as at Orval, it was to find a monastery that had been completely pillaged.

However, several communities were expelled from their monasteries for the duration of the war. Scourmont, from the spring of 1942 until the liberation in September of 1944, was occupied by a command post of the *Luftwaffe*, and had to stay with the Christian Brothers in Momignies. Echt had to close its doors in October of 1942. The monastery became the school of a Hitler Youth Group, and the library was taken to Germany. The monks took refuge in various monasteries in Holland or in the foundation of Ockenheim (especially the Germans). The abbot of Echt was taken hostage for sixteen months. Achel, where a large number of the monks of Echt took refuge, also had to leave the monastery in January 1943, suffering another exodus. But little by little several monks were able to return to the outbuildings at Achel. In fact, the community was divided into four groups. There were other kinds of threats and partial expulsions. In 1943 three wings of the monastery of Achel burned down, leaving only the library and the sacristy.

The two monasteries in Yugoslavia, Mariastern and Deliverance, were occupied by German troops who invaded the country in 1941. Holy Week was celebrated in the cellars at Mariastern, because of the bombardments. Even though the monastery became more or less an army barracks and an economic center for the German/Croatian militaries, the monks were able to remain and welcome the community of Deliverance when it was driven out by the Gestapo. The two communities lived side by side until 1945. Around Christmas, 1943, the partisans who fought the Germans invaded the monastery and pillaged it. The monks were afraid for their lives, and hid in a ceiling loft. During this time the battle was raging around Banja-Luka. In the end, German tanks drove back the partisans, but the upper floors of the building were no longer habitable. A new influx of soldiers had to be accommodated, and the monks crowded into the infirmary.

Mariawald was also dispersed by the Nazis at the beginning of the hostilities. The monastery became State property and was turned into a hospital. Several brothers were asked to remain to help maintain the buildings. As for Engelszell, in Austria, it was in July of 1939 that the Gestapo visited the monastery. Several

monks were arrested and four died at Dachau. The Abbot, Dom Gregory Eisvogel, was imprisoned for two years at Linz before being expelled from the country. He returned after the defeat of the Reich. The monastery was confiscated in November of 1939, and became a hospice for the incurable, sheltering up to 200 residents.

EXPERIENCES OF OCCUPATION IN OTHER MONASTERIES

In general, monastery guesthouses were occupied short-term by refugees either when troops were moving in 1940 and 1944 or when the bombardment was particularly intense. The troops, most often Germans, used the guesthouses for longer or shorter stays (in at least a dozen monasteries). At Briquebec and Tegelen, troops gradually took over the regular places and stayed for the duration of the war. When the Allied troops landed and advanced in 1944, some monasteries served as field hospitals.

In come cases, communities had to assist the surrounding population throughout the war. Westmalle fed some 1,800 persons, and dispensed 400 kilos of flour each day. For three years, Timadeuc harbored 90–100 persons. Tre Fontane opened its doors to 300 civilians, some whom were Jewish. Later on, Don Léon was declared as a "Righteous Gentile" by the State of Israel. Jews were also hidden by monasteries in France. German plans for a Nazi Alsace had designated Altbronn to become a rest home after the war, and the monastery was thus fortunate to have its installations modernized at the expense of the invaders, but still had to shelter 70 elderly persons, and lived under constant threat of expulsion. One day the nuns of Altbonn were told that buses had been requisitioned to take them away. Fortunately the expedition was put off to a later date and never took place.

In a number of places—Melleray (for a year), Laval (for four years), Port-du-Salut (for six years), Bellefontaine (in 1943–1944)—the community shared its living space with seminarians who had fled from the cities, where supplies were harder to find. The Brothers of Ploërmel and some Capuchins were also welcomed at Timadeuc and Bellefontaine.

IN THE VICINITY OF RESISTANCE GROUPS: SEARCHES.

It wasn't for monks to enter into active Resistance against the invader. But some monasteries were in areas where Resistance groups were active. Sometimes, more or less without their knowledge, monastery property served as drop-off points for arms supplies. Timadeuc went so far as to offer one of its cellars as a rifle range for testing arms, and as a place for making false documents. The old mill at Dombes served as a hiding place for equipment and arms. In several places, members of

the Resistance came to the monastery to seek provisions or to request a temporary hiding place for unlucky pilots and paratroopers. Escapees from forced labor in Germany also hid themselves in the ranks of the community.

These things did not happen without arousing the suspicion of German occupation forces, and there were even searches, some more threatening than others. Orval, close to the border, was the object of four inspections. Two monks were imprisoned, and a third was forced to go underground; the abbot was several times called in for intense interrogations. Désert also had many problems: the monks were suspected of being linked to the activists in the region, and in July 1944, German machine guns were fired near the walls of the monastery. On August 2, the Germans invaded the monastery, accusing the monks, even striking them. They planned a punitive operation for August 18, but they left the area that day because of the advance of the Americans. At Timadeuc and Dombes, which were more deeply involved, the searches took a tragic turn. At Dombes, the cellarer, increasingly suspected, was taken to a concentration camp, and died there. On May 19, 1944, a hundred SS invaded the monastery, and threatened the monks for three hours. Two priests were beaten and several persons were taken prisoner. Fortunately, they were freed due to a close friend's courageous intervention with the Gestapo. At Timadeuc, the cellarer was also imprisoned in a concentration camp from which he never returned.

OUR MONASTERIES OUTSIDE OF CONTINENTAL EUROPE

The monks of Mount Saint Bernard were not mobilized. They had to endure various privations and the problems caused by frequent bombardments during the first years of the war. Fortunately, the bombs did no damage to the monastery, which was merely shaken. But the community did not receive vocations as long as the hostilities lasted.

Canada entered the coalition against Germany, as did all the dominions of the British Empire, but southern Ireland remained neutral. However, the Canadian monks were not called to serve in the armed forces. The monasteries only suffered the privations imposed on the country and diminished recruitment, since young people were mobilized. Oka nonetheless grew steadily, and could even say that the war years were years of blessing. They had to build a wing to accommodate the novitiate!

It was the same for the monasteries in the United States, which entered the war after the Pearl Harbor disaster on December 7, 1941. Even the postulants and novices were exempt from being drafted, and many presented themselves at the monastery gates. The Valley recruited to such an extent that they had 92 persons at the

end of the war, and Gethsemani had to found Conyers in Georgia in the midst of the war, because it was bursting at the seams. New Melleray wanted to participate in the production effort to which the country was called, but due to the caprices of the weather they had no record-breaking harvests. In fact, in 1945, they had to sell the cattle due to lack of feed, and this was a great loss for the community.

THE AIR RAIDS AND THE LIBERATION ON THE WESTERN FRONT IN 1944–1945

Tegelen, near the German border, was located near an airfield and several factories that were targeted by the Allied air forces, and the monastery suffered much fright and anguish. Often in the middle of the night they had to go down to the crypt of the church, but the bombs only reached the farm. In any case a fire ravaged three wings of the monastery on April 21, 1943, the cause of which was never known. Belval had the experience of learning that the crypt of the church was not a good shelter. On February 9, 1944, a bomb fell into the cellar and destroyed the wall that separated it from the crypt where about ten sisters were working. The force of the impact projected a nun several yards, and she was killed. Because of this incident, and since the monastery was near a launching pad of German V-1 missiles, half of the community spent several months with the Bernardines of Flines.

On June 6, 1944, the Allied troops landed on the beaches of Normandy. The Norman monasteries had a ringside seat. But Bricquebec and La Trappe, both requisitioned to be field hospitals for three weeks, were spared. At La Trappe the hospital took up most of the monastery, and forced the SS to move out of the guesthouse. The SS withdrew to Tourouvre, ten kilometers away, and carried out the massacre of eighteen civilians when they left the area on August 13, burning about fifty houses.

But for some monasteries, the last months of the advance were the most painful. At Ubexy, the nearby city of Charmes was bombarded, and 150 men were carried off, 110 of whom never returned. The population took refuge in the monastery, which had to feed more than 250 persons. For a whole week bombardments were nearly non-stop, and there was artillery fire over the roofs of the monastery, but fortunately it was not hit.

Tegelen and Oelenberg suffered more. In November 1944, the bombings around Tegelen forced the population to flee, and they took refuge in the monastery. All the cellars were transformed into dormitories. The halt of the British at La Meuse and the German counter-offensive delayed the liberation until March 1, 1945. The bombardments began again, and in a single day 60,000 shells were fired. Several buildings were damaged. A shell landed on the transept of the church, and airplane machine-gun fire was aimed at the refectory, which, fortunately, was empty

at that moment. At about the same time, Berkel was hit by a last huge bomb in March of 1945, but suffered only the loss of doors torn away and windows broken by the blast of the explosion. Berkel, however, had been on the front line in October of 1944, and the sisters had had to stay in the basement for several days. The following January, the monastery became a Headquarters and field hospital for Polish and Canadian troops.

It was toward the end of November 1944 that the agony of Oelenberg began. The community had already borne its share of suffering during the occupation, especially when four young monks and three lay brothers left for the Wehrmacht; but it was worse when the first French Army, after taking Mulhouse, stopped at the Doller, which runs along the abbey. The Germans had set up an observation post in the tower of the church, which became the target of French artillery beginning on December 10. Half of the hay and the entire grain harvest perished in fires ignited by the shelling. At one time the monastery had to feed more than 400 refugees who sought shelter there, but finally it had to be evacuated in January of 1945. Only one priest, one brother, and three workers remained to welcome the first French soldiers. Before the Germans fled, they killed all the livestock, and put mines in the garden and the fields. All the farm equipment was damaged, and there were large holes and gaps in the buildings. In less than thirty years, the monastery had to be rebuilt twice. The statue of Mary above the main altar remained standing, as it had in 1914–1918, a sign that the protection of Our Lady really had not failed.

THE SITUATION IN THE FAR EAST

The war began earlier in the Far East than in Europe, since the Japanese invaded Manchuria in 1931, and penetrated further into China from 1937 on, meeting with resistance from Nationalist as well as Communist armies. Apart from the assassination of Fr. Emmanuel Robial of Liesse in 1932,[2] our monasteries in China suffered little from the situation until 1945, even though Our Lady of Liesse was situated near an important railroad line, thus in the center of the firing. Damage was insignificant.

Beginning in 1939, however, Our Lady of Consolation experienced more threatening times: searches by Communists of the region involved bad treatment of some of the monks, and the monastery was left defenseless. Japanese soldiers, who were not far away, made forays and raids from time to time. One night in March, 1940, the monks had to shelter 1,000 people who were caught outside at nightfall. Moreover, maintaining supplies was difficult and the local people turned

2 See § 3.1.2. on Dom Herman Joseph Smets.

to the monastery, which was helped by an English and American Council. But the situation was sometimes critical. It was in these circumstances that an exhausted Dom Louis Brun suffered a stroke in May of 1941. His resignation had already been accepted by the Abbot General the preceding year, but it was not yet in effect. It was in effect later in 1941 when Liesse became a priory and elected a Chinese as prior, Dom Paulin Ly. A French monk who had come to China in 1938, was elected the fourth abbot of Consolation, Dom Alexis Baillon.

In Japan the two communities lost their leaders in 1942, when the French were forced to leave the fortified area of Hakodate. The abbot of Phar, Dom Benedict Morvan, and the others who were expelled, went to the annex founded in the diocese of Nagasaki in 1925 (Our Lady of the Holy Family). As for the Abbess of Tenshien, she left Japan with eight nuns and the chaplain, who had been drafted to be an interpreter in Indochina. All were received by Admiral Decoux in Saigon, and settled in the Haut-Tonkin in Taiping. In March of 1945 the Japanese, who were occupying Indochina, forced them to go to a concentration camp, near Hanoi. They returned to France in 1946, but several were able to return to Japan later on.

The signing of the armistice with Germany on May 8, 1945, was not the end of the war for Japan. Since rumors spread that the Americans would attack south and central Japan, refugees fled to Hokkaido. The nuns of Seiboen (Nishinomiya) had to leave their monastery, which was close to an air field and was turned into a military camp. The refugee nuns arrived in June and July at Tenshien, extremely tired from their difficult journey, thinking that the nightmare of the bombardments had ended. But it continued; alerts began in mid-July, and they had to lie down in the high grasses and under trees during the bombardments of Hokadate. The attack lasted about fifteen days until the first atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima at the beginning of August. At the end of the month the abbess and several lay sisters from Seiboen set out again for home. It was like a second foundation, because everything had to be rebuilt. The last of these returning nuns left Tenshien in December.

THE RESTORATION OF THE MONASTIC LIFE IN GERMANY AND AUSTRIA UNDER ALLIED OCCUPATION

Maria-Veen and Ockenheim suffered little war damage. They were the places of refuge for the German monks of Mariawald, Echt, and Engelszell, and in fact benefited from the presence of so many monks. The prior of Engelszell served as superior of Maria-Veen, but it was the Nazis who administered the property. Beginning in September 1944, Maria-Veen received the German monks of Mariastern, with their abbot, but these, in accordance with the decision of the General

Chapter, went to Engelszell in November of 1951. Maria-Veen was thus left empty, and the monastery was closed. Ockenheim was closed in 1950 for other reasons.[3] In 1948 the community was still without news of their two mobilized monks; a third was detained in Russia.

Mariawald was reoccupied as soon as possible, but the buildings were badly damaged, most of them destroyed at the time of Germany's defeat. The superior appointed in May of 1939 died in July 1943; it was another superior who tried to rebuild the community. Little by little, according to the financial possibilities, the monastery was restored.

At Engelszell, the exiled abbot returned in July 1945, with a small number of monks. It took more time for the others to return. In 1948 one priest was still a prisoner in Russia. The frontiers were closed and guarded, and it was difficult to obtain visas. The German candidates could not come, and the Austrians were not drawn to the purely contemplative life. The library was slowly restored through the return of scattered books. A third of the terminally ill patients still remained in the house. Dom Gregory Eisvogel died on November 15, 1950. At this time the community had only 4 priests, 2 temporary professed, an oblate priest, and 20 lay brothers. Fortunately, as was said above, the monks of Mariastern who took refuge at Maria-Veen came to Engelszell with their abbot, Dom Bonaventure Diamant, who was appointed superior of the new community. This put the community on its feet again, but at the Chapter of 1952, Dom Diamant offered his resignation, and had a monk of Mariastern, Dom Benno Stumpf, appointed to succeed him. He was blessed as abbot in April 1953, after 12 priests and 2 lay brothers changed their stability.

4.1.2. Latroun in Palestine During the 1948 Israeli-Arab War

On November 29, 1947, the United Nations recommended dividing Palestine into an Arab State and an Israeli State. The Arabs rejected this plan, and war began immediately. As soon as Israel proclaimed its independence, on May 14, 1948 (on the eve of the English withdrawal), the armies of Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan, and Syria attacked. But Israel, in a ten-day campaign (July 9-19), drove them all back. Latroun was in the midst of the fighting. Monastic life continued there as much as possible, in spite of some 500 shells that fell on the property of 27 hectares (66.69 acres). It is a miracle that anything was left standing after weeks of bombardment. The most difficult period for Latroun lasted three months.

May 16, the day of Pentecost, the community was awakened at midnight by

3 On these two communities, see Chapter 6 on the expansion of the Order between 1892 and 1965.

artillery fire. They were attacking the chateau that overlooks Latroun. Every successive night was marked by bombing. When the monks worked in the fields, they heard the hiss of shells over their heads, passing from one camp to the other. On Corpus Christi the mattresses were taken underground, and the refectory was set up in the basement. In June, when the monastery was hit directly, Fr. Elias was wounded, fortunately only slightly, when a shell exploded; but a young brother was torn to pieces when he tried to defuse a bomb. A truce was declared in mid-June, but it was impossible to take in the harvest; the fields were too close to the Israeli lines, and the harvesters were fired at. On July 9 the war began again, and another ten days were spent underground, until a violent artillery duel took place 400 meters from the monastery on July 18. Needless to say everyone's nervous system was put to the test. The monastery remained an oasis of peace for the two camps. The officers of the United Nations stayed in the guesthouse, and it was there that meetings with Israelis and Arabs took place.

4.1.3. The Fate of Several Houses under the Yoke of Communism after the War

Soon after being freed from the German occupation, certain countries in Eastern Europe and the Balkans fell under the yoke of Communism. For our Order, this affected the two monasteries in Yugoslavia that had already suffered under the German occupation. At Mariastern (Marija Zvijezda), at the end of September 1944, faced with the advance of Tito's troops, the German monks had to leave for Maria-Veen, along with the abbot, Dom Bonaventure Diamant, himself a German. Eight monks were sent to a concentration camp, three of whom died there. In 1947, a good number of monks and lay brothers were still scattered or in concentration camps. Those present lived in part of the guesthouse, because the abbey had been confiscated. But at the end of 1948, everyone was expelled; the priests dedicated themselves to ministry, and the lay brothers hired themselves out as workers. However, the authorities allowed the new church to be used for Mass and the sacraments,[4] and the monks were able to serve there. For five years they stayed in a small room that was used for everything. Even after his resignation as superior of Engelszell, Dom Bonaventure Diamant could not return. He died in Austria in 1957, after having lived several years at Mariawald. A superior was then named at Mariastern.[5] Fifty years later, in 2007, the community was down to two persons.

4 The church was consecrated in 1969. It was restored after earthquake damage on October 27, 1969. A small monastery was built near the cloister wall of the cemetery.

5 However, in October 1964, Dom Fulgence Oraitsch was elected abbot. He settled with several monks at Kloster

The fate of Our Lady of Deliverance (Rajhenburg) was more drastic. The community had scarcely returned in 1945 when it was expelled and thrown out on the street on February 28, 1947. The monastery was confiscated. The abbot, Dom Pius Novak, was imprisoned for fifteen months, and then lived in a rectory at Radmirje along with several brothers. For several years this rectory was the nucleus around which the community regrouped, but it could not last. Unlike the superior of Mariastern, Dom Pius only obtained permission from the government to attend the General Chapter once.[6] The priests ministered throughout the country, and the Holy See allowed them to keep their vows, if they so desired, in spite of their actual secularization. Several lay brothers lived with their family or served priests in parishes. After the death of Dom Pius, Christmas of 1982, only a superior *ad nutum* was appointed. The community was died out in June 2004, with the death of the last brother, who retired to the Cistercian monastery of Stična, whose abbot always showed great kindness to the Trappist monks.

Our two communities in China suffered even more damage from the Communist regime. Consolation was in Communist territory beginning in 1939. It is clear that the Communist's intentions were not favorable toward the monks, but in the beginning they hid this fact. The monks were able to spend the war years in relative tranquility. However, the Communists were looking for a reason that would justify condemning the monastery. A trap was set. The response of a somewhat naive brother was interpreted as an approval of a plan to assassinate a general. Also, among the abbot's papers was discovered an invitation to pray for the uprooting of Communism. Nothing more was needed. The abbot was arrested and imprisoned with two priests from October 25, 1945 to March 17, 1946. They were brought before the "People's Tribunal." The abbot was found guilty of murder, and was forced to leave China. Before leaving he made Fr. Michel Sui superior of the house.[7]

Tragedy struck in 1948 and 1949. (For further details, see the chapter on the martyrs of the twentieth century.) As the Capitulants in 1948 expressed it in their letter of esteem to the Holy Father,

> The witness of blood has been asked of several sons of Cîteaux. Our hearts are afflicted because of it, but our souls exult in the hope that soon this immense Chinese empire will be conquered for Christ, since, simultaneously, the crusade of prayer and sacrifice, in its highest manifestation of "martyrdom," has attacked this citadel of Satan, so long fought over.

Ivanic in 1969. After his death in 1977, Dom Ambrose decided that everyone should return to Mariastern.

6 It was the Chapter of 1957: Dom Gabriel had him preside at the opening pontifical Mass.

7 The resignation of Dom Alexis Baillon, who had returned to France but was still abbot, was accepted by the General Chapter in 1949.

The monastery of Consolation was pillaged at the beginning of July 1947, then burned on August 30. In between these dates the seventy-five monks and brothers were treated roughly and tortured in the monastery, suffering repeated insults and beatings by the people. Then, in chains, they endured a veritable death march across the mountain. The eldest and weakest did not survive. The priests who did not perish on the way were imprisoned. Some were executed. The thirty or so who were liberated were able to spend some time in buildings belonging to the Benedictines in the center of Peking. Then, thanks to the nuncio and the help of Dom Paulin, prior of Liesse, they occupied a small dairy outside the walls of the city. They were able to receive the visits of Dom Morvan, abbot of Phare, and Dom Marquis, abbot of Bricquebec, in April of 1948.

There were thirty-five martyrs in all, two of whom were monks of Liesse. This latter community was finally able to move to an island of Hong Kong in 1949, but eleven monks who remained in their former refuge (in the south of China) were arrested for a time, and of these, two perished as a result of their confinement.

Peking was taken by the communists in February 1949, and the People's Communist government took over all of China in October of that same year. The persecution against the Church began in December 1950. In April 1954, the police took over the dairy at Consolation, and imprisoned the superior, Fr. Benoît Wang, who had been ordained a priest May 30, 1948, as well as the other priests. The community, which had about forty members, was finally dispersed in October 1954. Since then they have been in hiding. How can we doubt that the seed, fallen into the earth, will eventually bear fruit?

4.2 DOM DOMINIQUE NOGUES' TERM AS ABBOT GENERAL

It was in the midst of the war that Dom Herman Joseph Smets died, January 4, 1943. It was, of course, impossible to hold an election of a successor. Thus the Vicar entered into service. At that time he was the abbot of Timadeuc, Dom Dominique Nogues.

On the occasion of a funeral service celebrated at Cîteaux on March 31, 1943, for Dom Herman Joseph, several abbots were able to meet, and Dom Dominique asked them a series of questions, mainly on how to maintain the governance of the Order after the death of the Abbot General. The Procurator wanted the Vicar to come and live in Rome, but he could not abandon his community in the midst of the war, especially because it was having difficulties with the occupation forces. Besides, it was not easy to travel to Italy, which at that time was in the enemy

camp, and in France he could be in contact with thirty-five communities, more than would be the case if he were in Rome. In October, Italy declared war against Germany, and the troops of the Reich invaded. The Allies landed in Sicily in July 1943 but would only get to Rome in June 1944.

In May of 1945, Dom Dominique undertook a certain number of visits of monasteries, and returned from them quite tired. It was not a good time for him to go to Rome; it was too hot there, and the Procurator himself discouraged him from coming. He sent two circular letters to the communities to give them the first news that he received from those who had suffered the most from the war. On December 12 and 13 he gathered some twenty abbots who could make the trip from France and Benelux to Cîteaux. But their decisions had to be confirmed by the Definitory in order to be considered official.

The first of May, 1946, the General Chapter opened at Cîteaux, and its first action was to elect Dom Dominique Nogues as fifth Abbot General of the Order.

The newly elected was born at Radenac, near Rohan, several kilometers from Timadeuc, on December 14, 1879. He entered the minor seminary of the Brothers of Ploërmel on October 14, 1892, while the abbots of the three Trappist congregations were meeting to form the Cistercian Order of the Strict Observance. Then, six years later, he entered the major seminary of Vannes, where he received the tonsure and minor orders. But after his military service, begun in November of 1900, he entered Timadeuc on October 3, 1901, and received the white habit of a novice at the end of the month. He was thus able to pronounce his simple vows on All Saints 1903. On November 21, 1906, he made solemn profession. He was at that time cellarer, while also continuing his studies. He was ordained deacon and priest on March 16 and May 25, 1907. To his duties as cellarer were added those of bookkeeper and master of the lay brothers. Then he was appointed superior of the refuge house that Timadeuc had purchased in Canada in 1903. This was Petit-Clairvaux, which was left empty by the monks who had entered the abbey of Lac in 1898. Dom Dominique arrived there at the end of October 1912. Two years later the First World War broke out, and Dom Dominique was called back to France to serve in the armed forces, but he was discharged and returned to Canada on November 26, 1914.

ABBOT OF TIMADEUC

However, at the end of the war the political situation in France changed, and like other communities, Timadeuc closed the refuge established on the other side of the Atlantic. On July 24 Dom Dominique returned to Timadeuc, and his abbot named him prior on August 13. There he met up again with Fr. Alexis Presse,

whom he had known in the novitiate. The latter had been sent to Rome in October 1910 for studies, and had been made master of studies in 1913. He was doubtless more brilliant than Dom Dominique, but his reform ideas caused uneasiness. Thus, after the death of Dom Brieuc, it was the prior who was elected abbot on June 2, 1922. Installed on June 18, Dom Dominique received the abbatial blessing on July 19.

One of the first decisions of the new abbot was to rebuild the monastery. Dom Chevalier had begun reconstruction of the monastery in 1895–1896, north of the church, but without getting the plans approved by the General Chapter. These plans were not for a traditional monastery, so what was begun ended up serving as the guesthouse and infirmary. Dom Nogues built the regular buildings south of the church. The construction lasted from 1928 to 1933. In 1934, Dom Chevalier's earlier constructions were adapted to their new purpose.

Dom Dominique was also distinguished for writing a study on the mariology of Saint Bernard that won a prize from the Faculty of Theology of the Catholic Institute of Paris, which had organized a competition. His Marian devotion was not primarily an intellectual pursuit. The Virgin Mary was his "lady," *domina mea*. His memorial card bears a poetic line that he loved to repeat: "the proof of his death would be that his heart no longer fluttered when the name of Mary was traced there."

On his coat of arms he designed an image of the two hearts of Jesus and Mary projecting their rays. For him, observance had to be vivified by love, but it nevertheless remained the basis of his approach. He said, "There are no lesser or greater points in the Usages; each one is a manifestation of the will of God and should be treated as such." He was therefore basically stern, but his sternness did not affect his affability towards others. His austerity can also be explained by a certain conception of penitence based on a mistrust of human nature.[8]

After the election of the successor of Dom Ollitrault on July 16, 1929, during which he received a large number of votes (on the second round he had only three fewer votes than Dom Smets), he was elected Vicar General. It was in this position that he looked after the Order from the death of Dom Smets in the middle of the Second World War until his own election on May 1, 1946.

ABBOT GENERAL

The 1946 Chapter was a chance to receive news from the communities at the end of the war. This Chapter studied the decisions that the Definitory had made from

8 For the source of this paragraph, see *Collectanea*, 1958, p. 75.

1939 to 1946. A certain number of proposals that were not on the agenda came up during the Chapter's deliberations. Because of lack of preparation it was not possible to deal with them, but they indicated a future evolution. They had to do with the participation of the lay brothers in the liturgy, their meals, the beard, prolongation of sleep, the time of "mixt" (breakfast) for the choir monks, the improvement of the diet because of the general decline in health, etc.

It was the moment for Dom Dominique to announce clearly what his term as Abbot General would be like. According to the Minutes of the Chapter:

> The Rev. Fr. Abbot General energetically defended our austerities, and was opposed to everything that could be a mitigation of our Holy Rule. Without doubt he recognized the weakness of today's temperaments, and was most paternally concerned about this situation, both in our houses of men and in our monasteries of women. The question merits study and it will be studied, but it cannot be resolved hastily. It would be dangerous to enter on the slippery slope of general modifications. It seems better to stay with the status quo. For each case, let the Superior use the powers conferred on him or her.

But the following year, at the request of certain abbots, these questions were put on the agenda. "The monks' health is declining; there are so many exceptions that in certain monasteries there are nothing but exceptions. Would it not be good to study this question of diet and sleep?" And it was suggested that the portion in the evenings on fast days of the Order be increased, and milk be allowed with coffee in the morning, with butter as an indulgence. At the beginning of the Chapter, Dom Dominique reminded everyone that his task was to "maintain the observance of the Rule, especially in these times in which the spirit of independence and criticism, not to say worse, is infiltrating everywhere, even in our communities. This spirit destroys the divine and supernatural element of our life, forcing us to lose the desire for holy things. […] And it is not by mitigations of our observance that the level of fervor will be kept in the Order." After having pointed out several abuses that exist in the communities, he called upon the Capitulants to help him in this task of "national defense," which seemed necessary. They responded several sessions later, when the question came up whether they could temporarily, at a Plenary General Chapter, introduce in the common diet fish, eggs, milk products, butter, sugar, etc. After a rather lively exchange, the secretary noted, the Abbot General, who was clearly against this proposition, asked: "do we want to maintain what the Constitutions and the Usages put forth?" Only 4 dared to answer negatively; 39 were for the status quo. In his letter to the communities in December

1947 Dom Dominique stated that the Chapter had energetically reacted against the tendencies seen here and there toward a more mitigated observance, and he explained that, if the health of the young people was fragile and seemed to call for these mitigations, it was doubtless that recruitment was too easy; there are other Orders with a less austere regime for them. But at the Chapter of 1951, 36 out of 43 agreed to begin a study of the question of having an hour more of sleep. Connected with this was another question to be studied: the reduction of vocal prayers so that there might be more time for *lectio divina*.

When Dom Dominique presented his resignation, precisely at this 1951Chapter, he observed that the Order was growing rapidly, proof, he said, that "the interpretation of the Rule established by our Constitutions is always and everywhere acceptable. To seek to eliminate any of the important elements under more or less specious pretexts is to foster confusion and dissension where uniformity and peace reign. […] At least, in leaving you, I will not have to reproach myself for having contributed to making you take on such a responsibility!" The Vicar General, Dom Gabriel Sortais, admitted that in 1946 Dom Dominique had been elected, in spite of his age, because, after so many upheavals, the Order needed its leader to be an example of fidelity to the Cistercian traditions.

Dom Dominique was the rock, the granite, needed at the time. This role did not keep him from being kind and gracious on the level of human relations. Dom Gabriel Sortais also said that he would be remembered for his personal charm, his cheerfulness, his simplicity, and his love for the Blessed Virgin.

It was this charm that was perceived during Dom Dominique's visits to the monasteries when he was elected Abbot General. During the summer of 1947 he visited 19 communities in the United States, Canada, Ireland, England, Scotland, and France. He returned to America in 1949. Only the German-speaking monasteries and those of the Far East did not receive a visit from him. But his end-of-the-year letters reached all the communities. Let us mention the letter—his last one—that closed the Holy Year, 1950. We must be saints, passionate for Jesus, drawn resolutely to sanctity, to union with Jesus; and the means to this is indicated by the Rule: truly to seek God, that is, totally, with perseverance, progressing in his love. "The one perfection that the monk can desire is that of self-forgetful love, which considers only the joy of the Beloved." But to please God is lovingly to accomplish his will, as our Fathers have established and as the General Chapters constantly clarify for us. Thus, the ideal of each member becomes that of the entire community, and the community in its turn will be the support of each member on the journey.

SOME DECISIONS FROM THIS ERA

The liturgy commission that had been revived in 1947 worked in continuity with what was on the agenda before the war. The Ceremonial received its last corrections and was published in 1948, the Ritual in 1949, the Missal (first edition since the approval of the Rubrics in 1924) and the Breviary in 1951. Other books were in preparation, notably those concerning monastic initiation and a menology. The commission also applied itself to a calendar, being careful to promote the predominance of the temporal cycle, especially the Sunday office, over the sanctoral cycle. Some wanted a more complete return to the former Cistercian rite, but a dilemma appeared with the reform of the Paschal Vigil by Pius XII in 1951. Should we restore the Middle Ages or keep abreast of the times in a doctrinal and spiritual deepening of the liturgical celebration? There was also a question about adopting the new Latin version of the psalter.

The commission was sensitive to more coherence in the Liturgy of the Hours, and it was decided in 1948 to place Lenten Vespers in the afternoon, even if it meant singing the office *after* the only meal that was taken, which according to the Rule was "after Vespers," but which had been served at noon for a long time.[9] In any case, since the rubrics of the missal provided for the Lenten Mass to be celebrated after None, the Little Hours were still celebrated before 8:00 or 8:30 a.m. Beginning in 1953 the proper time of day was better respected for these three moments of prayer.

There were improvements regarding chant. In 1947, rhythmic signs were allowed, and a new expanded *Kyriale* was published the following year. A Commission of Architecture was established, whose mission it was to verify that plans for new buildings be in conformity with tradition, especially for the church and regular places.

The Chapter of 1945 asked the Law Commission to draw up a process for the building of monasteries. In the end the Directory inherited this task. In 1951 it submitted an interesting but long draft of a "practical guide" of rules to follow.[10] However, the Chapter had neither the time nor the opportunity to examine it. Only one commission studied it. All the Abbots were invited to send their comments to the Definitory during the following year. The project was not finished until 1953, under Dom Sortais, in a rather short statute drawn up in Latin, which represented progress over preceding practice.

Several decisions affected only the nuns. In 1947 the Order obtained the per-

9 In 1893 the desire to respect the letter of the Rule took precedence over the actuality of the Hours.

10 See Appendix 2 in the agenda of the 1951General Chapter, pp. 9–30.

mission that, after three mandates, an abbess could be re-elected with a three-fourths vote, so that a unanimous vote was no longer required. Later, in 1950, it was requested that the abbatial mandate last for six years instead of three. Elections that were too close together were a source of unrest and lack of stability in governing a community. The indult of the Holy See was granted for ten years on January 14, 1952, and extended on February 26, 1962.[11]

In 1950, Pius XII promulgated the Apostolic Constitution *Sponsa Christi*, which was to have several repercussions on the life of the nuns. This instruction allowed the generalization of solemn vows. The 1926 Constitutions of the nuns already permitted the monasteries to adopt solemn vows along with papal enclosure. But it remained possible to make only simple perpetual vows, which seems to have been the practice in most of our communities. Henceforth the perpetual vows taken by the nuns would all be solemn. Those who had previously made simple vows could either remain in those vows or make solemn vows, with the approval of the bishop and the Holy See. The Apostolic Constitution redefined the rules concerning enclosure, which caused the Order to redefine its own rules, especially for the monasteries that up until then were under the regime of simple vows. It also reminded the Order that the nuns in solemn vows were obliged to recite the Divine Office in private when they were absent from choir. These new demands caused worry and confusion in some places, but on the whole the nuns were happy to change to solemn vows.

Moreover, beginning in 1951, the Order offered the nuns a certain intellectual formation in the monasteries by means of published courses. It took some time for this project to get under way.

RESIGNATION

In 1951, Dom Dominique was 72, but his health was declining and he had to have two surgeries. He admitted that at times his state of health left him without energy. He also felt that the time had come to offer his resignation. Perhaps he also sensed that soon certain reforms could no longer be put off; he preferred to withdraw beforehand. The Chapter agreed with the reasons put forth by Dom Dominique, and accepted his resignation on the morning of September 14, 1951. The acceptance was probably made easier by the fact that there was an obvious successor.

Dom Dominique retired to Timadeuc, observing the most complete discretion on the way the government of the Order was managed in the following years

11 In 1969, the Holy See accepted that an abbess be elected for six years and eligible for re-election with the following conditions: with a two-third's vote for a third mandate and a three-fourth's vote for the following mandates. In the new Constitutions of 1990, the elections of abbots and abbesses are the same.

as well as on the way things were going in his community. On December 8, 1951, between the hands of Dom Gabriel Blourdier, abbot of Timadeuc, he renewed his promise of obedience and his stability in that place.[12] He died on November 25, 1958, after two or three years spent in a kind of twilight, due to the weakening of his faculties, which caused him to lose a sense of time and place, to the point that he could no longer celebrate Mass or hear confessions. It was the final trial of his life.

12 A monk of Timadeuc left a testimony on these years of retirement; see *Collectanea*, 1958, pp. 72–80.

SUMMARY TABLE

Year	Date	Dom Nogues and the Order	External Events
1879	December 14	Birth at Radenac (Brittany)	
1898	October	Major Seminary at Vannes	
1901	October	Entrance at Timadeuc	Law of July 1, against Congregations
1902	July 20		Death of Leo XIII
	August 4		Election of Pius X
1903	February–June	D. Chautard meets Clemenceau and the Senate commission	
	November 1	First simple vows	
1906	November 1	Solemn profession	
1907	March and May	Ordained deacon, then priest	
1912	October	Superior of Petit-Clairvaux (Canada)	
1914	August 2		First World War
	August 20		Death of Pius X
	September 3		Election of Benedict XV
1919	July-August	Return to France, Prior of Timadeuc	
1922	June 22	Elected Abbot of Timadeuc	January 22: death of Benedict XV
	November 13	Dom Ollitrault elected Abbot General Dom Smets - Vicar General	February 6: election of Pius XI
1929	February 25	Death of Dom Ollitrault de Kéryvallan	Lateran Accords
	July 16	Dom Smets elected Abbot General Dom Nogues, Vicar General	
1934		Mariology of St. Bernard	Hitler, Reichsführer
1936			Spanish Civil War
1939	February 10		Death of Pius XI
	March 2		Election of Pius XII
	September 1		Beginning of World War II
1943	January 4	Death of Dom Smets, Abbot General Dom Nogues in the interim	Encyclical *Divino afflante*
1944	June 6		D-Day
1945	May 8		Germany surrenders
1946	May 1	Elected Abbot General	
1947	July	Beginning of the "martyrdom" of O.L. of Consolation	Encyclical *Mediator Dei*
1949		Re-issue of the Ritual of 1689	October: People's Republic of China
1950		Holy Year	Encyclical *Humani generis*
	November 1		Dogma of the Assumption
	November 21		Apostolic Constitution *Sponsa Christi*
1951	February 9		Restoration of the Paschal Vigil
	September 13	Presented his resignation, accepted September 14	
1958			October 9: death of Pius XII
	November 25	Death at the abbey of Timadeuc	October 28: election of John XXIII

SECTION FOUR: CENTRALIZED ADAPTATION (1951–1965)

CHAPTER FIVE

Dom Gabriel Sortais' Term as Abbot General

5.1. THE PERSONALITY OF DOM GABRIEL SORTAIS, ABBOT GENERAL (NOVEMBER 1951–NOVEMBER 1963)

(*by Dom Emmanuel Coutant, former Abbot of Bellefontaine*)

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Dom Marie Gabriel Sortais, *Les choses qui plaisent à Dieu*, Abbaye de Bellefontaine, 1996 (third edition).

A book put together by the monks of Bellefontaine after Dom Gabriel's death. It includes the circular letters he sent to the monasteries of the Order and the conferences he gave to the abbots at the General Chapter or to various communities (sometimes only extracts).

André Fracheboud, "Le Révérendissime Père Dom Gabriel Sortais, Archiabbé de Cîteaux, sixième abbé général de l'Ordre des Cisterciens de la Stricte Observance (1902–1963)," *Collectanea* 25 (1963): 325–42.

5.1.1. Strength in Weakness

We know well the saying of Saint Paul, to whom the Lord declared: "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness" (2 Cor 12:9). If there are Christians who, in their own measure, follow Paul's example and live out this saying of the Lord in a remarkable way, it seems to be the case of the life of Dom Gabriel. In one of his letters, Dom Gabriel says that, learning from Saint Thérèse of the Child Jesus, he had come to understand the suffering of the weak, the small, and those who have hope because of their weakness. Lack of strength is the greatest strength when it goes along with habitual trust in the goodness of a Father like God (see Oury, p. 284).

Shortly before his death, he wrote to a nun:

> Saint Paul assures us that our weakness is our strength. We repeat the saying after him, but in practice we have rather a hard time believing it. We want support and security, whereas God would have us think and say that He is our only support and security. It is this kind of trust and complete abandonment that moves our Father.

a) DOM GABRIEL'S WEAKNESS

1 *His Temperament*. Once, at a family reunion, young André Sortais mentioned off-the-cuff to one of his uncles that he intended to enter a Trappist monastery. The response he got was: "You? But you must be out of your mind." And another added: "You'll be back within three weeks." He did not, in fact, seem cut out for the quiet life, as one relative wrote after his death. He had inherited a noisy and demonstrative temperament, bursting with vitality. As a child he was subject to temper tantrums when contradicted.

2 *His Health*. At six feet, Dom Gabriel's strong build could be deceptive. He was, in fact, of rather delicate health. In the second year of his novitiate, he fell ill to the point of being confined to the infirmary up to the time of his solemn profession, that is to say, four years. It is understandable that he hesitated to commit himself when the time came, and many of the brothers also hesitated to admit him permanently into the community. It took the determination and the influence of the abbot, Dom Chouteau, to settle the question. When Sortais became abbot of Bellefontaine in 1936, he was already exhausted a year after his election, and had to take a long rest period at the monastery of Gardes.

At the beginning of the war, in 1940, after just a month of ministry among the soldiers as an army chaplain, he suffered intestinal problems and was once again completely worn out. In 1943, when he was asked to add the community of La Trappe to his responsibilities for a time, his state of health was appalling. Throughout his life, and especially during his years as Abbot General (1951–1963), Dom Gabriel suffered a great deal from poor health. Without exaggeration, it can be said that he was weighed down with persistent fatigue, often giving the impression of being completely exhausted. At the age of fifty, he said, he felt worn out like a man of seventy (Oury, p. 219). He underwent seven surgeries, including the removal of a kidney. Dom Oury in his biography is not exaggerating when he says that, beginning in 1953, Sortais' life was one long way of the cross (Oury, p. 258).

In 1961 he wrote: "I spent all of July and the beginning of August going from

hospital to hospital in Rome.... I was quite sick and suffered a great deal...." (Oury, p. 295). And he acknowledged that he felt weak in the face of suffering (p. 220).

3 *Intellectually*. As an adolescent, Dom Gabriel did not like the secondary school where he received his early intellectual formation. If he was not successful in his studies, it was partly because of the circumstances (he was twelve when the First World War began in 1914), and he was the first to recognize that he had no taste—nor courage—for studies. He had a keen mind and was gifted with a reliable memory, which seemed to dispense him from having to work with determination. He sometimes played truant, so it is no surprise that he twice failed his university entrance exams. Later, when he passed competitive exams for entrance at the School of Fine Arts, it was just barely and by luck: in one of his subjects he was asked the only question on the program that he had seriously studied.

Later still, in the monastery, as a newly professed preparing for the priesthood, he suffered from a combination of circumstances, in spite of his efforts and his good will: shaky health, and lack of real teachers. For philosophy, the sub-prior appointed to give classes did not manage to go beyond the manual by Farges and Barbedette. For theology, although the professor was better equipped to teach the subject matter, he had little time, leaving Gabriel with little more than an elementary theological formation.

Finally, when he became Abbot General Dom Gabriel regretted that he knew no foreign language. At Monte Cistello with the students, and during his visits to most of the monasteries of the Order, he had to rely on interpreters, a dependency he found paralyzing (Oury, p. 245; 276). During the Second Vatican Council, his difficulties in understanding spoken Latin and his elementary theological formation prevented him from following all the twists and turns of the discussions.

4 *His Life of Faith*. Dom Gabriel acknowledged that he had experienced two particularly trying crises in his life of faith and hope. Although he received strong spiritual consolations during his novitiate, the following three years were extremely hard. At a very deep level, his faith was, as it were, withdrawn from him, far from his conscious awareness, and he hardly knew where to turn (Oury, p. 82). It seemed to him that his faith no longer existed, that heaven was closed, and that God had disappeared from his life. The non-existence of God seemed so obvious to him that he had to drive away the thought with all his might (Oury, p. 56).

Thus, a trial of faith, added to the trial of sickness and the consequent solitude (his abbot seldom came to see him in the infirmary), left him quite at a loss. This trial came to an end, however, after the death of his spiritual father, Fr. Louis, who, before dying, promised to intercede in his favor before God. "I have got back my

faith," he wrote later on to one of his relatives, "with great joy and thanksgiving. . . . I have recovered my faith totally; no more darkness . . . and not the slightest doubt has surfaced ever since" (Oury, p. 61).

Reaffirmed in his faith, Fr. Gabriel was, as an abbot, sorely tried in his hope, a trial that lasted over twenty years, from 1936 to 1958. During that time, he felt he had nothing on which to base his hope. He felt rejected by God. Won over by God in the past, he now felt persecuted by him. All security was taken away from him. He was thrown into utter confusion, with all the bitterness of broken friendship and wounded trust. He felt as if he were the object of an incomprehensible anger, abandoned and alone, face to face with his misery, trying in vain to pull himself away from his sinful condition. There is some similarity to Job's drama, but Job was sure he had justice on his side, whereas Fr. Gabriel felt and thought he was a great sinner (Oury, p. 82–83). "It is hard," he wrote, "to feel sure that the heaven you so firmly believe in is not for you, and that you are destined to be eternally separated from God" (Oury, p. 84). It seems that these temptations against hope had as their starting point an exorcism Dom Gabriel performed early on as abbot, upon the request of the bishop of Angers.

b) The power of God in Dom Gabriel's weakness

Let us note first of all that monks and nuns were not the only witnesses of Dom Gabriel's influence. Of particular importance is the testimony of the many people who met him during the war. We have, for example, this testimonial from Bishop Mazerat, former bishop of the Angers diocese, who had known him as chaplain of an army division:

> The real key to his influence was his union with God. We knew him first of all as a monk who had an intense life in God. To be around Dom Sortais gave us a felt sense of God's presence . . . . Dom Sortais also had important natural gifts that helped him in his ministry: balanced judgment, ease of contact, a certain finesse of manner, a kind of nobility, but at the same time a warm and frank cheerfulness. (Letter of December 1963, *Collectanea* 25 [1963]: 333).

Repatriated in early 1941 on account of the Geneva Accord (chaplains were not considered combatants), Dom Gabriel felt bound in conscience to speak in favor of prisoners in various parishes in the area around Bellefontaine. For several months he preached in these parishes on Sundays. But he spoke in such daring

terms regarding the Nazi Germans, whose soldiers then occupied France, that it was several times feared he would be arrested.

In October of that same year, 1941, the German colonel in command of the city of Nantes was assassinated. As a reprisal, fifty civilian hostages were to be executed if the guilty persons were not found; and they were not found. Dom Gabriel was so distressed by this situation that, after careful consideration and insistent prayer, he went to Nantes, where he managed to obtain a personal meeting with the Feldkommandant, offering his life in exchange for the lives of the fifty hostages. The officer refused, but was shaken. That evening, the radio announced that the hostages would be spared (Oury, p. 141–42).

Toward the end of 1944, after the liberation, there began a period of so-called "purifications" in the region, which unfortunately gave rise to vendettas and frequent instances of injustice. Summary arrests were made on mere suspicion or insufficiently verified accusations; there were imprisonments, and sometimes executions. Again, Dom Gabriel was distressed by the situation. He thus accepted a request to sit on the Liberation Board of Cholet, the nearest town. His courageous interventions—twice a week for several months—saved from imprisonment and even execution many good people who had been unjustly suspected or arrested. At that time Dom Gabriel appeared to be a man who knew no shyness, hesitation, or fear, and who marched straight ahead on the path of duty. He proved to be a humble but irresistibly strong force that nothing could stop (Oury, p. 150).

5.1.2. His Vocation

By receiving his monastic vocation after a rather free and stormy youth, André Sortais had already experienced something of the power of God's grace in his life and in his heart. The preparation for, and to some extent the communication of this grace, came through feminine influences. First, there was his cousin, who as early as 1917, when he was fifteen, exercised her influence, bringing him closer to God, but only for a time. In fact, when his mother died in 1920, young André admitted that he nearly lost his faith, and stopped all religious practice for several weeks. Then he met a young woman, a practicing Catholic, with whom he fell in love. Through his association with her grace made its way in his heart. The human love that brought him back to God quickly caused him to progress toward total detachment. He began to look in the same direction as this young woman, with whom he attended Mass almost every day. He then began to feel God's call through various circumstances. In 1922, while staying with an aunt, he felt more strongly than ever the call to give his life entirely to God. But it was not until

March 1923 that he told the young woman he loved about this calling. Her answer was, "I cannot stand between you and God." They were never to meet again.

André Sortais thus entered Bellefontaine in August 1924, taking the name Gabriel.[1] After a period of strong spiritual consolations, he underwent serious trials, as mentioned earlier: sickness, isolation in the monastery infirmary, and hard and persistent temptations against faith. He nonetheless held out, whereas many others would have lost heart. When the time came for his final vows in 1929, it was by the grace of a heroic act of trust in God, along with obedience to his abbot, that he was able to make up his mind. Toward the end of his life, he admitted to having experienced temptations of all kinds, but never again temptations against his monastic vocation.

5.1.3. Prior and Then Abbot of Bellefontaine

In 1930, Dom Jean-Baptiste Auger succeeded Dom Chouteau as abbot of Bellefontaine. (Chouteau died in late December 1929, after sixty-three years as abbot). Two years later, the new abbot chose Fr. Gabriel as prior. The task was not easy, because Dom Jean-Baptiste had poor health and was quite sick at times. Moreover, by temperament he was hesitant and slow to make decisions even about important and urgent matters. The brothers suffered from this situation and were tempted to murmur. The prior also saw clearly his abbot's shortcomings. However, when brothers came to him complain, he was careful to keep them within the limits of filial love and respect for their abbot. Fr. Gabriel always supported the abbot in front of the monks, even when his decisions seemed questionable. "It must have cost him dearly at times, because his own temperament was intense and fervent. When speaking one-on-one with Dom Jean-Baptiste, he was not afraid to say what he thought about some of the decisions he had made or failed to make" (Oury, p. 69). So the situation was delicate and difficult. Moreover, Gabriel's imperfectly restored health after his three years in the infirmary suffered from his many occupations, and now that he was prior, he had qualms about taking care of himself.

In April 1936 Dom Jean-Baptiste resigned, and the following month Dom Gabriel was elected to replace him in the office of abbot. He was not yet thirty-four. It was then that he began to show his real worth, or, rather, to dedicate himself completely to serving his brothers, turning everything over to God and trusting in his grace. "If I had had knowledge, experience, or virtue," he wrote one day, "I would have counted on these elements when I gave my answer to the community's vote, and to do so would have been a mistake. So I relied on Jesus and his grace,

1 In memory of Fr. Gabriel Mossier, a brilliant military officer, who became a lay brother at Chambarand, where he died in odor of sanctity in 1897.

and I said yes." And he added: "As long as I count on the Lord alone, all will go well. Thus my uselessness and my deficiencies force me to depend entirely on God and to draw near to him" (Oury, p. 72).

This sincere confession might, however, be misleading, because Dom Gabriel had many great qualities:

> He was a simple and upright person, a man endowed with great strength of soul and free from nearly any kind of selfishness. He loathed pettiness. He had in his favor youth, energy, decisiveness, and a firm, upright judgment that was usually quick and sure. He had a natural aptitude for being in charge and governing. He was helped in his task by, on the one hand, a strong will, and, on the other hand, a force of attraction that he exercised without realizing it. He could speak in public, elaborate clearly on his thoughts, and share the faith and fervor that motivated him. His sense of humor kept him from making tragedies of situations that were merely serious or difficult. Above all, he had an exquisitely sensitive heart. His enthusiasm was contagious; people enjoyed following his lead . . . . But these qualities and gifts could never explain the influence his person exercised on others. . . . Indeed, he was already a man of God. (Oury, p. 76)

As abbot of Bellefontaine, he had to take on the responsibility of Father Immediate for the communities of Notre-Dame des Gardes and Oka (Lac) in Canada. He had to keep up with them, corresponding regularly with their members, especially with their superiors, and occasionally making a visit. He already had his hands full. But soon the Abbot General at the time, Dom Dominique Nogues, entrusted him with the sensitive mission of helping reorient two monasteries in France that were in difficulty. He thus took on the extra task of being superior of La Trappe from 1943 to 1945, and then of Melleray from 1947 to 1949. Among other things, these tasks obliged him to make stays of varying length in one or the other of these monasteries, all the while keeping up with his responsibilities at Bellefontaine and his own daughter houses. When he began as abbot, Bellefontaine numbered forty-five members; when he was elected Abbot General in 1951, there were nearly eighty members.

Dom Sortais taught regularly at the daily chapter each morning. Usually he spent about ten minutes commenting on a passage of the Rule of Benedict. On the whole, the brothers greatly appreciated the clarity and depth of his talks. Although the Order is a monastic Institute dedicated to penance and contemplation, he would say, the two aspects cannot be placed on an equal footing. Penance must be subordinate to contemplation, disposing the monk for contemplation by puri-

fying him. Contemplation is meant to be a habitual attitude of heart toward God, an attitude that everything in the monastery is supposed to foster: the place, the buildings, the observances, and, especially, silence. Bodily ascesis has its place, but what is more important is ascesis of the mind and heart, as Saint Benedict presents it, especially in chapter seven of his Rule. Dom Sortais was, of course, convinced of the need for penance, but from time to time he thought it necessary to recall that the interior life takes pride of place. The body, he would say, can submit to hard exterior living conditions without the soul following suit. If, on the other hand, primacy is given to union with God, it will not be possible for the person to miss the point of monastic life (Oury, p. 89–90).

Dom Gabriel therefore worked at improving observance by breathing new life into it. He said that he would have liked to have had the time to write a few lines of introduction for each Chapter of the Usages, expressing their spiritual meaning. This is what he finally did in 1962–1963. He also thought it necessary to break down the airtight barrier between prayer and work. He himself had a passionate love for nature (Oury, p. 94–95).

In his rapport with the brothers and with people from the outside, his strong personality (accentuated by his height) made itself felt right off, and sometimes gave rise to fear. But he was very understanding, and quickly put the other at ease. If, at certain times and in certain circumstances in community life, he was unable to control his impulsive character, giving in to anger, he was the first to suffer from it, and later did his best to make up for the pain he may have caused. He went each day to the infirmary to visit the sick, if only for a few minutes. He sometimes said in private that he made this daily visit because he had suffered a great deal from the near total isolation from the superiors and the brothers when he was sick at the beginning of his monastic life. He asked his priors to take his place for this visit whenever he could not make it himself, especially when away from Bellefontaine.

To have a better idea of the kind of abbot Dom Gabriel was at Bellefontaine it is enough to look at what he said about the office of abbot in his commentary on the Rule to the brothers of Bellefontaine, or in the conferences he gave at the General Chapter as Abbot General, or in his letters to the communities. It may seem that he idealizes somewhat, but those who knew him well can attest that it is largely his personal experience that comes through in this teaching. In his preface to the collection *Les choses qui plaisent à Dieu*, Dom Ignace Gillet, who succeeded Dom Gabriel as Abbot General, notes:

> Dom Gabriel wrote less for the sake of teaching than for the sake of sharing a living conviction. It is the warmth of this conviction that gives these pages

> their value. His sole ambition was to communicate to others something of his experience of God in faith. He could not speak as a "doctor," but he could certainly bear witness to the things he spoke about. In other words, you will not find here a theologian; what you will find—if you are in tune with his simplicity—is a soul in love with God.

5.1.4. Abbot General

At the 1946 General Chapter, Dom Gabriel was elected Vicar of the Abbot General, Dom Dominique Nogues. Because he was more and more weighed down by his office and by age-related illnesses, Dom Dominique often called on his Vicar to visit monasteries with difficulties. Then, in September 1951, he resigned; two months later, Dom Gabriel was elected Abbot General.

Given his weak health, in spite of appearances, it was a wonder that the new Abbot General was able to sustain so much activity for twelve years (1951–1963). Hardly a year and a half after being elected as head of the Order, he had the first of the seven surgeries he would be obliged to undergo.

His first concern was to make contact with each of the ninety-six communities of monks and nuns settled in seventeen countries, some as distant as the Far East. He wanted to have firsthand knowledge of the living conditions of these communities and to see if they were truly seeking God. He went everywhere in the space of a few years, beginning with the communities that had suffered most from the 1939 war. In each community he gave instructions, sometimes prescribing directives to help improve the situation. He made personal contacts—and not only with superiors—that in some cases entailed a continuous exchange of correspondence. At times he claimed to have fifty, one hundred, and even as many as one hundred and sixty letters awaiting an answer.

From the Generalate he tried to have an effect on all the houses of the Order by sending *Circular Letters* on the Cistercian vocation or on certain problems of the day. He wrote a total of twenty-six such letters. Another way of exercising his influence on the Order were his conferences to the abbots at the General Chapter, along with some letters written only for their use, like the fifty-page letter he sent them at Christmas in 1961.

He also has the merit of having perceived for the Order—twelve years ahead of time—a need for the kind of *aggiornamento* the Second Vatican Council found it necessary to carry out for the good of the Church (See section 5.2 on the evolution of the Order during Dom Sortais' term as Abbot General).

Dom Gabriel undoubtedly had a greater impact on the life of our Order in his day than the Abbots General who had preceded him since the year 1892.

5.1.5. Dom Gabriel and the Church

What about his influence at the level of the Church? It would be risky to say. Let it be noted that, shortly after his death, his successor as abbot at Bellefontaine was astonished to receive a letter from Msgr. Macchi, Pope Paul VI's secretary. In this letter, Msgr. Macchi explained that he intended to offer as a gift to the Holy Father on his eightieth birthday an album with the photograph and a hand-written page of one hundred persons who had had an impact on the Church, especially in spiritual matters, over the last century. He hoped to obtain a photograph and a hand-written text by Dom Gabriel!

The Monastery, a Cell of the Church

Dom Gabriel liked to quote Pope John XXIII, who, in a personal letter to him in 1960, had written that "contemplative life is part of the essential structure of the Mystical Body of Christ. . . . By their suffering, their love, and their prayer, [contemplatives] carry out silently in the Church the most universal and most effective apostolate" (*Les choses qui plaisent à Dieu*, pp. 364–65). In a paper he wrote for the inter-monastic seminar at Ligugé[2] (it was read there by someone else), he noted: "Monasticism springs from the Church, from the irresistible movement that carries her toward Christ in his final coming, from her ardent desire to contemplate the face of her Savior and be taken up in this contemplation." He went on to say: "The momentum that sustains the monk in his search for God alone is the power of the Spirit, who, throughout the ages pushes Christianity on toward its final completion, when the figure of this world will pass away, and when the only thing that will matter will be the face-to-face meeting between man and God…. The monk thus bears witness to the Church in an especially important way, and the Church needs this witness and this hope." He ended his conference by highlighting two duties that befall any monastic institute today: the monks' duty to keep their vocation intact, and the duty of answering the call of the young Churches by establishing monasteries. Throughout his time in office as Abbot General he encouraged Cistercian foundations, which soon increased in number.

2 "On Establishing Monastic Life in Mission Countries," July 9, 1961.

Obedience to the Sovereign Pontiff

Dom Sortais had a lofty concept of the obedience owed to the Holy Father, the Vicar of Christ, and the head of the Church. In his early days as a monk, when, in 1925, Pius XI felt he had to disapprove of Catholic Action, young Br. Gabriel, formerly a militant activist in the movement, was deeply affected. However, not only did he accept the condemnation personally, but he also convinced some of his former friends and companions, who were also upset and hesitant, to obey the Holy Father. At Bellefontaine, brothers who knew him as their abbot still remember the spirit of submission with which he spontaneously accepted and presented to the community the directives, and even all the documents, coming from the Holy See.

As Abbot General, at the 1963 Chapter, he defended Cistercian foundations in mission countries in the face of certain abbots who found it difficult to accept them: "We cast our net in Africa on the word of the Popes, and we were not mistaken" (Oury, p. 232). In the questions he presented to the Holy See, he upheld his point of view to the very end, but as soon as the authorities gave their verdict, the question was closed, and he required total obedience, going even so far as to ask the Holy See to interpret certain details, in order to follow them more closely.

Several times, when he needed to settle a matter that bothered his conscience, he tried to obtain the personal opinion of the Pope or of his representatives in the Congregation for Religious.

The Second Vatican Council

At the beginning of the great event for the Church that was Vatican II, Dom Gabriel took part with keen interest. He wanted at all costs to do his job as a Council Father; for him it was a matter of conscience. He therefore participated in the discussions that took place at various levels. From the start he was appointed as a consultant for the preparatory commission on religious life. He forced himself to take on such a load of work that it ended up draining his strength. When death caught him by surprise, he was in the middle of preparing an intervention; he was of the opinion that the schema text on the Church did not sufficiently bring out the aspect of the Church as *Sponsa Christi*, the Bride of Christ.

By way of conclusion, we quote the following lines written by Fr. André Fracheboud, who knew Dom Gabriel well from having been a definitor for many years:

> In the end it was the power of love that explains what the Father General meant to us. . . . It was love, understood and lived out as a gift of self, that

> turned the adventurous adolescent into a recollected novice, a monk who savored the hidden life with intensity. . ., and an abbot who was constantly at the service of his brothers of Bellefontaine and later at the service of the whole Order. . . . Constantly on the move and working without respite, he never allowed himself to waste a minute, but gave generously of his time and attention to anyone who came to him for advice. He was adamant with anyone who rebelled, but compassionate toward the weak and unable to resist the humble. He was capable of severity, but preferred forgiving, and was, in any case, quick to forget any wrongs done to him. He was concerned about maintaining things of lasting value and reforming anything that had lost meaning. In short, he was at one and the same time a strong man who was suave and sensitive, a monk with a passion for authenticity, and an Abbot General in the grand style. His motto (*Non loquendo sed moriendo*) all of a sudden came into full light at the time of his death. Dom Sortais did not realize he was dying, and did not have the time to say *Non loquendo*, but his death on the go—*moriendo*—and his life as a whole will continue speaking to us for a long time. (*Collectanea* 25 [1963]: 342)

Complementary Note on the Death of Dom Sortais

The official announcement on November 14 had it that Dom Gabriel died at Monte Cistello the evening of November 13, 1963. The facts were slightly different. At the noon meal that day he had welcomed three Benedictine abbots, and there was no hint at all about what was to happen a few hours later. After the evening meal, he was speaking in the hall with the master of students, when he began to feel burning pains in his back. Several monks were called to help, and they brought him first a chair and then a mattress. He was taken to a nearby room and settled into an easy chair. They massaged his back while awaiting the arrival of a doctor. The doctor came accompanied by the Mother superior and another sister from the clinic where Dom Gabriel had been treated in 1961. He gave him a few injections, and then decided to admit Dom Sortais to the hospital for an electrocardiogram and further medical attention. The patient was completely conscious, and even joking, in spite of acute pain. Many were unaware of Dom Gabriel's spell, and it was only after 9 p.m., when the students were already in the dormitory, that the cellarer, Br. Aimable Flipo, took the Abbot General to the hospital, along with Bishop Gran (a Trappist who had become coadjutor bishop of Oslo) and Fr. Clement, Dom Gabriel's secretary, followed by the doctor and the sisters.

A few moments after arriving, while the doctor was examining him, Dom Sortais, held upright on his bed, collapsed into the arms of Br. Aimable, saying,

"Brother, I'm fainting." Bishop Gran quickly gave him absolution, and even anointed him when a sister brought the Holy Oil. The Procurator was informed by telephone and hurried to the hospital, but Dom Sortais was no longer in this world. Br. Aimable went back to get a van and a mattress in order to bring Dom Gabriel's body back home. At around 10:45 p.m. he arrived at Monte Cistello, where the master of students, the infirmarian, and two or three brothers were awaiting him. However, the Mother superior and the doctor were upset about the fact that the death had occurred at the hospital, and that no formal admission or coroner's papers had been filed. If the matter were made public, they were liable to police and administrative investigations that could have led to charges for illegal procedures and even to the closing of the clinic. It was therefore decided to keep silent about the short stay at the clinic: the official version says only that Dom Gabriel was taken to his room and died there. The secret was all the easier to keep, because everything took place at night, and there were only a few witnesses. Now, forty-five years later, there is no risk in making the facts known as they happened.

The following day, Bishop Gran announced the death of Dom Sortais to the Council assembly. Many important figures—at least 120 bishops, several abbots,[3] other superiors or superiors general, and the ambassadors of France and Japan—took part in the funeral services on Saturday, November 16, which ended with a long procession to the cemetery of Tre Fontane, where Dom Sortais was laid to rest near three of his predecessors.

5.2. THE EVOLUTION OF ORDER DURING DOM SORTAIS' TERM AS ABBOT GENERAL

5.2.1. The Order's Expansion to Other Continents

When Dom Sortais became Abbot General, the boom of the American abbeys was continuing with foundations at Genesee, Ava, Snowmass, and Vina for the monks, and at Redwoods for the nuns. But the Order was also moving into sub-Saharan Africa with the intention of founding both men's and women's monasteries with no apostolic work in mind.[4] Thus were founded Grandselve (now Koutaba) and

3 From our Order, rushing to attend, were the abbots of Aiguebelle (Vicar of the Order), Cîteaux, Melleray, Bellefontaine, Dombes, and, of course, Tre Fontane and Frattocchie. The Prior of La Trappe represented his abbot. Bishop Gran and Fr. Basil Morison, the master of students, left in the archives of the Generalate their testimonies on Dom Sortais' last moments; Br. Aimable Flipo confirmed the testimonies orally in 2006.

4 The first foundations at Mariannhill and Bamania had taken on an apostolate.

Bamenda (in Cameroon), Mokoto, La Clarté-Dieu, and Kasanza (in the Congo), Victoria (in Kenya), Bela Vista (in Angola), and Étoile-Notre-Dame (in Benin). By adding Maromby (in Madagascar), the total comes to nine monasteries between 1951 and 1963. Others followed. In the Far East foundations sprang up in Indonesia (Rawaseneng), Australia (Tarawarra), and New Zealand (Kopua). At the same time, Japanese nuns made foundations at Imari and Nasu. The Order moved into Latin America with the foundation of Azul, in Argentina, in 1958, and at La Dehesa (now Miraflores) in Chile, in 1960.

During this period there was only one foundation in Europe, the nuns' monastery of Mariafrieden, along with the incorporation of six Spanish houses of Bernardine sisters.

As can be seen, most of the expansion was toward non-Western cultures. It was a turning point for the Order. In 1953, Dom Gabriel Sortais had the opportunity to present his outlook in a conference he gave at the Gregorian University in Rome.[5] Contemplatives must help missionaries by their prayer and penance, which they can do by remaining at home, in the monastery. However, they must also be a witness in each culture that the Church is not only apostolic but also devoted to prayer in continuous fraternal living. Wherever contemplative life spreads, both aspects must be apparent. It is not just a matter of bearing witness to contemplative life; the local population also must be able to live it. The establishment of the Church in a region must also involve the formation of local monastic communities. Dom Sortais went on to cite Pius XI's 1926 *Rerum Ecclesiae*, a quotation that would be repeated by Vatican II: "The contemplative life should be restored everywhere, because it belongs to the fullness of the Church's presence" (*Ad Gentes*, 18). It may be necessary to adapt secondary details of observance and custom to local cultures. It is important to maintain the authenticity of contemplative life, while at the same time allowing it to become indigenous. A few years later, on July 9, 1961, Dom Sortais returned to the subject in a conference he was invited to give at Ligugé (mentioned earlier).

Dom Gabriel took it upon himself to visit the monasteries of the Order every five years. The development of air travel made it possible to carry out this program, although air-service in Africa was both slow and difficult. As a result, he was frequently away on long trips of several months outside Europe. On July 2, 1955, he wrote that, except for a few recent foundations in mission lands, he had been to all the communities and knew nearly every monk and nun of the Order. He began his travels as early as 1952 by visiting the houses of Germany, Austria, and Holland, which had suffered greatly from the war, and then went on to the

5 "The Role of Contemplative Orders in Mission Countries," October 14, 1953.

United States and to the Near and Far East, where his predecessors had never gone. He made the return trip via Canada, where he was laid up by illness for over three months in early 1953, and had to have a kidney removed. But in the following year he visited Africa.

5.2.2. The Adaptations of 1953–1956

At the end of Dom Nogues' term as General, there was a sense that certain adaptations were needed, as can be seen in the agenda for the 1951 General Chapter. Dom Gabriel was among those who thought the adaptations were in fact necessary. Like Dom Dominique, Dom Gabriel did not want to leave the door open to laxity and decadence, but he realized that something needed to be done to counter the decline in health he was noticing. The Holy See seemed to be of the same mind, judging from Pius XII's December 8, 1950, speech to the Congress on the States of Perfection and in the Apostolic Constitution *Sponsa Christi* of November 21, 1951. Dom Sortais asked the Pope about the matter in a personal audience he was granted on January 1, 1952. Pius XII told him that he appreciated Dom Nogues sentiments, but that it was best not to follow that path. Thus, with the Pope's support, Dom Gabriel took to heart the question of necessary adaptations.

He did so with an awareness of his responsibility and with a desire to prevent things from getting out of hand. He was anxious to do everything in a uniform manner throughout the Order, that is to say, with the authority of the General Chapter, for which he drew up the agenda. He would not allow each community to make its own modifications of the Usages and customs, even in minor details, without the authorization of the central authority, and he said so in no uncertain terms at the opening of the 1953 Chapter.[6] He did not like maverick initiatives, which were his special dread throughout his term as General, and which he constantly denounced as a form of disobedience, a sign of self-will, and a violation of the unity of observances. In 1956, when he heard that the Congregation for Religious might leave communities the freedom to apply or not apply the adaptations requested by the 1955 General Chapter, he wrote to the Cardinal Prefect that, if such were the case, he preferred that the Congregation not grant the requests: "People's health will continue to suffer, and souls will continue to be undernourished, but at least the unity of the Order will be assured" (Letter of June 11, 1956,

6 He gave a few examples, like the placement of the schola in the middle of the choir, the direction of the chant by the cantor with hand gestures (chironomy), alternation between schola and community, the participation of lay brothers in the singing, the use of knitted socks or of work overalls, albs with lace, etc. It should be noted that at least one abbot, Dom Vincent de Paul Sonthonnax of Orval, in his answer to the 1952 questionnaire, argued in favor of abandoning uniformity of observance.

to Cardinal Valeri). God knows he thought the adaptations necessary and really wanted them, but he valued uniformity of observance above all else. To tamper with it, he said, would be a deathblow to the Order.

The agenda of the 1953 Chapter included a summary of responses from the superiors, who were asked at the 1951 Chapter, and then by Dom Sortais in 1952,[7] to send their remarks to the Definitory, without, however, being able to consult their communities or let them know about the research being done. This too was typical of Dom Gabriel's method: everything comes from above, and the communities are to be informed after everything is decided, at which point they have only to obey.[8]

The answers were diverse and nuanced. Some saw no need to make any changes on a general level, but acknowledged that the local abbot always has the possibility of granting personal dispensations. Concerning sleep, three-fourths found the current amount was insufficient. A compromise solution proposed was, on the one hand, to keep seven straight hours of sleep in summer, leaving out meridian (except in warm countries), and, on the other hand, to allow the possibility of an hour of sleep between Vigils and Prime (making this interval two hours long, to have time for both private Masses and sleep). As for the reduction of vocal prayer, it had to do with the Office of Our Lady, which was recited every day, and the Office for the Dead added to ferial days. Some superiors did not respond to the question about the Office of Our Lady; those who did answer fell into three more or less equal groups: keep it, omit it on feasts and memorials of Our Lady, or omit it in a more general way. There was greater unanimity concerning the Office of the Dead: four-fifths wanted to reduce its frequency, which for many of them meant limiting it to November 2 and the four major annual commemorations, or even, for some, to a monthly office.

Well-founded reasons for or against these changes were offered. An argument in favor of more sleep was the current decline in health, and excessive penance should not hinder contemplation and a life of prayer. But others objected, saying there were other ways to improve people's health. For these latter, to tamper with traditional observances was tantamount to laxity (if you start, how far will it go?), and would be a scandal to outsiders: many people cannot get seven hours of sleep,

7 He wanted to wait until the 1953 Chapter to discuss these questions, because that Chapter, which was to be held immediately after the celebration of the eight-hundredth anniversary of the death of Saint Bernard, would bring more superiors to Cîteaux than in 1952.

8 In his March 21, 1953 circular letter, he says that the abbot may, of course, consult one or other competent and discreet monk, but may not get the community's opinion by vote, which would be likely to cause confusion and perhaps lead to division. Was this not to underrate the responsibility of the monks and nuns? And yet God knows how much Dom Sortais fought against infantilism.

beginning with the Pope! If the austerity of our life prevents weak postulants from entering, it is not to be regretted, because quality is better than quantity.

As for the daily Office of Our Lady, was it not a particular privilege of our Order? And how much time would be gained by omitting it? At most, some would agree to having it recited in private, or to letting it take the place of the lay brothers office of Paters, to ensure that it be prayed in the Order. But those who were in favor of reducing vocal prayer said that true devotion does not depend on the multiplication of words, as noted in the gospel (Mt 6:7). In the earliest days of the Order this Office of Our Lady was not said in choir, nor was the Office of the dead.[9] Some objected, saying that the departed may need our suffrages, but that they are offered better through Masses and indulgences than by the Office of the Dead. Along the lines of reducing the amount of vocal prayers in order to leave more time for *lectio*, some proposed omitting the "matutinal" Mass, a second community Mass on Sundays and feast days, which totaled 114 in the year 1953.[10]

THE 1953 CHAPTER

The agenda of the 1953 Chapter, which gives the results of the survey, includes a note from Dom Gabriel Sortais, stressing the dispositions needed when the time comes to discuss these points. Each must bear in mind that his is not the only valid opinion. The opinion of others must be respected and they must not be accused a priori as being lax or lacking in religious spirit. It is advisable to be ready to accept the decision that will be made; it will not be made lightly and will require a two-thirds vote before being submitted to the Congregation of Religious for approval.

Dom Sortais reiterated these recommendations during the Chapter before the Commissions set to work on the proposed questions, "which are of major importance," he said. He went on to say that they must be studied "in an atmosphere of charity and prudence. Charity is needed, because in the discussions it is easy to wound a brother who does not have the same opinions; rather, one must be able to listen to him with kindness. Prudence is needed, because one must realize the seriousness of the decisions by thinking of the future generations that will form a judgment on this Chapter, and by thinking of God's rights over the whole of our life. One must not look behind or go back on the path of perfection. Any reform that would lead to laxity must not be considered at any cost."

This last statement, which he had already made in his opening speech, was

9 The reform of the liturgical calendar was held up by the question of the Office of the Dead. There was a desire to reduce the number of memorials and increase the number of ferial days, but that would have added to the number of days available for the recitation of the Office for the Dead.

10 Added to the priests' private Mass, that made three Masses to attend on those days.

to be Dom Gabriel's refrain, as he put all his energy into stressing that the adaptations he proposed were not relaxations. In this way, he hoped to counter the objections of the "conservatives," who could not countenance a loss of austerity in the Order, and the objections of certain members of the Congregation of Religious, who would be examining the requests of the General Chapter. It is known that the secretary of the Congregation, Fr. Larraona, a Spaniard, was opposed to any accommodations. For him, the Church needed the Trappists' austerity, and it needed to be maintained. Fortunately, the Cardinal Prefect, Valerio Valeri, was more understanding.

The questions were discussed in the commissions of the 1953 General Chapter. The figures of the results were communicated to the capitulants on the morning of September 17. "In an atmosphere of great charity, each one could then freely express his personal opinions on these subjects," and at the afternoon session the assembly proceeded to vote. By a 48 to 6 vote, the assembly accepted to make changes to the length of time for sleep provided for in the monks' Constitutions. By a 43 to 11 vote, it was decided that there would be seven uninterrupted hours of sleep throughout the year, with an optional meridian—pending, of course, the approval of the Holy See on this point and on the points that followed. Concerning the Office of the Dead, the assembly preferred that it be said only on major anniversaries and at the monthly office, besides, of course, in the presence of a departed monk. Opinions were more divided on the Office of Our Lady; by a 28 to 26 vote the Chapter opted for the possibility of changing the current practice. The change consisted in omitting this office when the canonical office is already of a Marian character (37 yes, and 17 no). As for the matutinal Masses, as second community Masses, they would be said after the Night Office, that is to say, at the time of the private Masses, and attendance at these Masses said at the high altar would be optional (49 yes and 5 no). Of 53 capitulants, 52 accepted the use of dairy products in Lent and Advent, execept on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

Without indicating the number of votes in the Acts of the Chapter, the proposal of the Fathers Immediate of nuns' houses was accepted, namely, that the nuns might take eight hours of sleep (continuous or not), the eighth hour being optional in the case of non-continuous sleep (i.e., a one-hour rest placed at another time, e.g., after Vigils).

THE RESPONSE FROM THE CONGREGATION FOR RELIGIOUS

It was still necessary to get the required authorizations from the Congregation for Religious. Dom Sortais, along with the Procurator, went to the Congregation as soon as the Congregation's Secretary, Fr. Larraona, got back to Rome. He had

the unpleasant surprise of finding out that the Congregation had already received reports from persons who regretted that the Chapter had taken the route of relaxations. The very thing he feared had happened. But he thus had the chance to reiterate that this was not at all his understanding of the requested adaptations.

The Congregation responded on November 9, 1953. It granted eight hours of sleep to the nuns, but seven continuous hours throughout the year for the monks, without a meridian (of half an hour), which was to be tolerated only in summer for monasteries in warm climates.[11] The Office of Our Lady could be omitted on Marian feasts or memorials. As for the Office of the Dead, when prescribed (i.e., in weeks then there was at least one ferial day), once a week was sufficient. These permissions—which did not grant all that the Order had requested—were provisional until the 1955 Chapter, at which point all the questions would again be raised. Obviously, it was not left up to the monasteries freely to determine how the schedule changes would be applied. Everything was to be done with uniformity of observance, as Dom Sortais pointed out in his circular letter of November 24, 1953, when promulgating the Holy See's response.

Further Discussions in View of the 1955 Chapter

The agenda for the plenary Chapter of 1955 includes a summary of the responses of those with voting rights to the questions Dom Sortais asked them in his letter of March 21, 1955.[12] In a letter to the abbots and abbesses on October 5, 1954, he asked them to write him personally to update him on the experiment underway and to tell him their thoughts and wishes. It was with their answers in mind that he sent them several questions in March, asking them to respond by June 15. These responses were listed in the Chapter's agenda: few wanted to go back on the decisions, and most wanted to move forward with further adaptations. Although the abbesses did not participate in the General Chapter, Dom Sortais took their opinions into account; they were along the same lines as those of the abbots.

Just before the opening of the Chapter, Dom Sortais received a letter from the undersecretary of the Congregation for Religious, dated September 3, letting him know about information they had received, indicating the development of a trend

11 Dom Sortais was left with the task of deciding which countries fell into this category. After speaking with the Cardinal Prefect, he named Italy, Spain, America, Jordan, China, Japan, Java, and Africa.

12 This long circular letter also foresees the schedules that will need to be approved if the requests about sleep and the Offices of Our Lady and of the Dead are accepted. And since there were a variety of possible answers to the questions, it was necessary to foresee several possible cases. There were thus 12 draft schedules, 26 if you add the schedules for Lent, special days, and for the lay brothers. There was matter for discussion! Taking advantage of the occasion, it was proposed to follow more closely the true times for the Office: Sext always before the noon meal, and None before afternoon work, even in Lent.

critical of the Order's traditional observances. He asked the Father General to be careful about anything that might disturb the peace and concord of souls. Dom Gabriel responded, assuring the Monsignore that the superiors' sole desire was to provide souls with better conditions in which to thrive. He also sent him a copy of the speech he was to give at the opening of the Chapter.

At the Chapter, Dom Gabriel was openly and firmly in favor of the requested adaptations. He now had a new supporting argument, which he had already mentioned in his March 21 circular letter. It was not a matter of merely accommodating things for weaker temperaments, but also of returning to the balance sought by the founders: "Our legislation had attained a beautiful harmony in which Offices, reading, and work were perfectly balanced. By lengthening the time of the Offices, however, other monastic occupations were reduced, and the interior life necessarily suffered the effects. Our Fathers would not have done this." No doubt he was influenced by a report along these lines that was written by a monk of the Order and addressed to the Holy Father; Msgr. Montini, pro-Secretary of State, sent a copy of it to Dom Sortais on September 3, 1954, to ask his opinion, before sending it on to the Congregation for Religious.

On the whole, the capitulants went along with Dom Sortais' recommendations. By a vote of 51 to 8, they thought that seven hours for the monks was not enough sleep, and that there was need for seven and a half hours. There was also general agreement on the Office of the Dead: only four voted in favor of going back to reciting it as before. The majority was not satisfied with the half measure adopted in 1953 (once a week); rather, they wanted to limit it to major anniversaries and a monthly office (45 to 13). There was less unanimity on the Office of Our Lady: 37 asked for its elimination, against 22 who preferred to keep the measure adopted in 1953; 11 of these even wanted to return to daily recitation.

The Decree of June 27, 1956

On October 7, 1955, Dom Sortais presented the General Chapter's requests to the Congregation for Religious, along with a long and substantial argumentation of twenty pages. Later, he would have to come back to these questions and provide new answers to the objections made directly to him or that he heard about.[13] Wanting to be persuasive, he went so far as to claim that we were being urged on by the Holy Spirit to deepen our sense of poverty and separation from the world, and that our efforts in these areas were a kind of prerequisite for being

13 He took pains to point out that the General Chapter's decisions were not a threat to "the work, the spirit, and the precepts" of Abbot Rancé and Dom Augustin de Lestrange, who wanted nothing other than a return to early Cîteaux and the Rule.

granted these adaptations. This idea later reappeared in the decree addressed to the Order.

The Cardinal Prefect received Dom Sortais for several visits. Since he planned to undertake a long trip to visit the monasteries of Asia, Australia, and Africa, leaving on December 8 and not returning until June of the following year, the Abbot General was hoping to receive the Congregation's response before his departure. He would then have been able to inform the Order about it without a delay of several months, which was all the more important because he had asked the abbots not to reveal the content of the Chapter's decisions to their communities before receiving the official response; it seemed a long time to keep a secret. But the Congregation wanted to assess and weigh everything, and wanted to take its time.

Reassured by the letter from Msgr. Montini on September 3, 1954 (mentioned above), Dom Sortais felt he was in a position to inform the Pope about the evolution of the projects, going through Msgr. Dell'Acqua, who succeeded Msgr. Montini in the Secretariat of State. He sent him a three-page report at the end of November 1955. He stressed the return to the balance of the Rule, which also included a concern for accentuating our poverty and separation from the world; he also pointed out that our way of life is still characterized by much austerity.[14] He found a way of letting Cardinal Valeri know about this recourse to the Pope. There is clear evidence that Pius XII was in fact interested in our Order and supported our requests, without, however, getting involved in the details. Dom Sortais again contacted Msgr. Dell'Acqua upon returning from his long trip, on June 13, 1956, giving him one last note for the Holy Father, because he had received troubling news about the Order's affairs: he felt that some important members of the Congregation were not fully aware of our situation. On July 9 he thanked the Sostituto at the Secretariat of State: "Our Order will be indebted to His Holiness, Pius XII, for the increase of interior life that will, I hope, result. But I cannot forget that without you, your Excellency, our wishes would not have reached the Holy Father." Dom Sortais was convinced that, without Pius XII's direct intervention, the requested adaptations would not be granted.

The decree was signed June 27, 1956. Dom Gabriel received it on July 5. It granted the monks seven and a quarter hours of sleep, and seven and three-quarter hours to the nuns, with an optional meridian of moderate length in summer (and superiors might also grant it at other times). The Office of Our Lady was to be omitted, on condition that it be replaced by something special in honor of Our Lady.[15] The Office of the Dead would be limited to twice a month, if the rubrics

14 In fact, even if sleep could be extended for a half-hour, it would continue to be taken fully clothed, on straw mattresses, and in a crowded dormitory, where every sound echoes.

15 On the basis of a suggestion he received, and which was approved by the 1956 Chapter, Dom Sortais proposed

allowed. The Definitory then laid down concrete norms on the application of the decree, and Dom Sortais commented on it point by point at the opening of the 1956 Chapter. But as early as July 16, he wrote a circular letter to the whole Order to announce the measures granted by the Holy See, and to explain their meaning and purpose. He repeated many of the points that he had expounded to the abbots at various General Chapters and in other circular letters, and he retraced the course of events from 1946 to 1956.

Faithful to his 1955 proposal and to his personal convictions, he obtained from the abbots at the 1957 General Chapter nearly unanimous approval of a whole series of measures having to do with greater separation from the world and greater poverty.[16] He was pleased to be able to inform the Cardinal Prefect about these measures and even to inform the whole Order in his Christmas letter of 1957.

5.2.3. The Lay Brother / Lay Sister Question: The Unification of the Communities[17]

Another point that occupied Dom Sortais from the start as Abbot General was the lay brother question. He was, of course, in favor of the lay brother vocation, but he realized that it was no longer possible to maintain the kind of discrimination affecting them with regard to community life, which came from the medieval notion that lay brothers are like the others, "except that they are not monks." This exclusion from the status of monk had meaning at the time, but could not be applied to modern-day lay brothers, who are religious in the strict sense. The distinction put them in a kind of second-class social position, which was less and less acceptable. The problem was all the more obvious in African monasteries, when the founders were choir monks from former colonizing countries, which further accentuated their social predominance. Moreover, the young people who applied as lay brothers generally had a better liturgical formation than had been the case in the past, and were surprised to find themselves having even fewer possibilities than normal parishioners: they were forbidden to hold books in their hands at the Sunday community Mass, or to join the choir in singing, whereas the Church, especially since the time of Pius X, encouraged the active participation of

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maintaining a sort of substitute Little Office: the opening verse (bowing to the knuckles), an Ave Maria, a sung antiphon, a versicle, a prayer, and the concluding versicle *Dulce nomen*.

16 Reduction of opportunities for going out or for holding pontifical celebrations outside and even in the monastery; not to waste too much time reading newspapers, and not to make them available to the monks except in case of necessity; to eat in the monks' refectory when visiting another community; to use wooden crosses, simple pectoral crosses, economy cars, albs without lace, etc.

17 This question was always discussed in terms of Lay Brothers (in the masculine), but it is clear that what was being said also applied to Lay Sisters in women's communities.

the faithful. The lay brothers of the present day were no longer illiterate men who can say only the Our Father.

Since this problem will be covered in a separate section, and since in any case Dom Sortais died before a conclusion was reached, there is no need to say more here. Suffice it to note that the Holy See began studying this question on its own in 1960, probably in view of the Council, which was soon to open. Dom Sortais was consulted on several proposals that various Benedictine Congregations had presented to the Holy See (Letter from Msgr. Philippe, November 25, 1960). In his response, written from Canada on January 24, 1961, the Abbot General pointed out that the best solution would be to have only one class of monks. Among the men, some could become clerics and even priests, with others remaining lay. The latter would not be bound to the full choral office, but to prayers indicated by the abbot. In general terms, this was the basic solution the Order later adopted.

5.2.4. Other Important Matters Concerning the Order

1. THE *RATIO INSTITUTIONIS ET PRAESERTIM STUDIORUM* & MONTE CISTELLO

Along with the adaptations and the lay brothers, another question that arose was formation in the Order and the building of *Monte Cistello* to accommodate the growing number of students from the Order in Roman universities. The large number of students was a consequence of the 1956 Apostolic Constitution *Sedes Sapientiae*: like all other religious Orders, our Order had to revise its formation charter in conformity with the norms laid down by the Holy See. A commission was set up in early 1957, and the Chapter of that year chose some basic orientations. One of these was to continue sending students to Rome, even though a number of abbots (twenty) thought they could also be formed elsewhere. *Sedes Sapientiae* required that professors, even in monasteries, have university degrees, which was not the case in many places. It was foreseen that a good number of students would come to Rome to acquire the diplomas they lacked. There were already 46 students for the 1957–1958 and 1958–1959 school years.

There was a risk that the Generalate on the Aventine would turn out to be too small. The General Chapter of 1957 accepted a plan to build a house for 80 students on a property that Tre Fontane would make available at low cost: it was what became *Monte Cistello*. The first stone was blessed on May 1, 1958,[18] and the house was occupied during the summer of 1959. The church was consecrated by Cardinal Cento on October 27, 1960, on which occasion John XXIII addressed a letter

18 This is the date inscribed on the stone, but the celebration took place the day before, because there was no public transportation on May 1, which would have made it inconvenient for the workers and invited guests.

to the Order. Better still, a few days earlier, on October 20, John XXIII deigned to visit the inhabitants of *Monte Cistello*, who were joined, at least in part, by the communities of Frattocchie and Tre Fontane. The 120 stalls were just enough to accommodate everyone. Then, on the following October 30, a number of personalities, including three Cardinals,[19] accepted an invitation to join the monks, architects, and builder for a meal in the refectory.

The number of students reached 80 in 1960–1961, remained below 70 the following three years, was 45 in October, 1964, dropped below 30 at the opening of the 1966 school year, and leveled out at fewer than 10 beginning in 1969. The numbers were so low that the part of the building meant for the students was rented out to the Daughters of Saint Paul in 1970. It was foreseeable that, once the monasteries had enough professors, the influx of students would decrease. What was not foreseen was the drop in vocations in many regions.

On the basis of positions taken at the 1957 Chapter, the appointed commission drew up a draft of a *Ratio Institutionis* (formation charter), which was approved by the following Chapter and presented to the Congregation for Religious on December 26, 1958. The Congregation approved it on August 20, 1959, but a few alterations to the text were requested, which were duly made at the 1959 Chapter. The *Ratio* was given final approval on the following November 27. The plan was that, after the Novitiate, during which studies are limited to the Scriptures and spirituality, the young professed would have two and a half years of philosophy, and then, after solemn profession, five years of theology, with a final year of "pastoral" studies for brothers going on to the priesthood.

Dom Sortais was greatly concerned about the students he took in at *Monte Cistello*. He was aware of the possible danger it might present for monks not yet firmly rooted in the monastic spirit to have the freedom that a stay in Rome entailed, along with such things as summer vacation for those who did not return to their monasteries (because distant from Rome, for example).[20] He begged the abbots to send only monks of real merit: he suspected that several students would not persevere in the Order. He wanted their stay at *Monte Cistello* to be formative for their monastic life, especially since many would later take on responsibilities in their community and in the Order. He wanted life at *Monte Cistello* to be a model.[21] A statute for students was approved by the 1962 Chapter, filling out the 1953 statute for the Generalate.

19 They were Cardinals Valeri, Cento, and Larraona. The following year, on the back wall in the sanctuary, was installed a beautiful Virgin and Child in polychrome wood, surrounded by angels singing God's praises, a work by the sculptor Roland Coignard. It is now in the church at Vitorchiano.

20 The same applied to travels from the monasteries to Rome. Dom Sortais wrote a long letter to the abbots on July 26, 1963, about students' travels.

21 Even with regard to the installations in the building: e.g., for the sake of monastic discipline, he did not have

The nuns were not forgotten in the formation effort. Beginning in 1951, courses in monthly installments were prepared within the Order on a number of subjects: Holy Scripture, theology, liturgy, spirituality, history of the Order, etc. These courses were eventually published, and in a chapter of his 1961 Christmas letter to the abbots, Dom Gabriel explained how they should be used. An offprint of this chapter was sent to the abbesses. At the 1953 Chapter a five-year formation plan for young nuns was drawn up and unanimously accepted.

2. THE ABBESSES' MEETING AT CÎTEAUX

The abbesses did not take part in the General Chapters; the abbots made decisions for them. The idea surfaced to invite the abbesses to gather for a "congress" to make their wishes known on questions that affected them. The idea was approved by the Congregation for Religious, which granted the needed permissions for leaving the cloister, by the Fathers Immediate, and by the 1957 General Chapter. The first meeting was scheduled for June 1958 at Cîteaux, but political turmoil in France that May, triggered by events in Algeria, caused the meeting to be postponed until the following year. After this meeting, a certain number of measures proposed by the abbesses were upheld by the 1959 General Chapter. The measures having to do with the Constitutions and enclosure were accepted by the Congregation for Religious on December 7 and 10, 1960 and on January 5, 1961. The Abbot General promulgated all of these decisions on March 14, 1961. It was then that abbesses were authorized to visit communities, along the lines of Regular Visitations, but not as Regular Visitors in the strict sense. But there were only three such visitations in the six years that followed.

These meetings of abbesses are covered in the chapter on the evolution of the female branch of the Order in the twentieth century, so nothing more need be said here.

3. THE REVISING OF THE USAGES, 1963

Just as certain points of the Constitutions were modified, other points having to do only with the Usages also needed updating. The 1958 General Chapter requested a revision of the Usages "to simplify and shorten them, and also to provide notes on the origins and spiritual meaning of the various points." The Definitory was to tackle this revision, which was a bigger and more delicate task than it appeared to be.

sinks placed in the dormitory cells, even though this choice entailed a loss of space, because there was need for a common room large enough for 80 students who got up at the same hour and had only fifteen minutes to wash.

A draft of the first "book" was ready in early 1962. Dom Sortais sent it to sixteen abbots on January 6, asking them to examine it themselves and, if need be, have a few competent monks examine it, but without having everyone discuss it in the conventual chapter. The other books were sent one at a time when they were ready; the abbots had a month to send in their remarks. Some points were settled by the 1962 General Chapter. The final version was completed in 1963, but Dom Sortais wanted spiritual notes to be added, showing the soul of the prescriptions. This extra step took time, and the work was finally ready only after Dom Sortais' death.

4. LITURGY QUESTIONS

The liturgy commission continued its work of correcting the various liturgical books. But the Order found itself faced with a new situation, because the Holy See was moving into a phase of liturgical reforms, first for a reform of Holy Week, and then a simplification of rubrics both for the Divine Office and for the celebration of Mass. In 1962, the so-called John XXIII Missal was issued, being the last edition of the Tridentine rite (the edition that Benedict XVI's July 7, 2007, *Motu Proprio* allows to be used freely). Just as they began wondering what to do, given the new reforms, the Council, which opened in October 1962, announced many more on the way.

So the General Chapters over which Dom Sortais presided had a lot on their plate. There is no need to recall the details of the decisions, because they were, in any case, transitional: it all had to be gone over again from the ground up after the Council.

The liturgy commission held several meetings between General Chapters. The fruit of its work and research was published in well-documented booklets that provided a wealth of references that are still useful.

5. THE STATUS OF THE ABBOT OF CÎTEAUX

Up until 1961, the Abbot General retained the title of abbot of Cîteaux, but was unable to govern the community directly, which would have entailed various drawbacks for the life of the community. Moreover, the Cîteaux community did not have the right to elect its own superior, even if, in practice, it was consulted concerning the choice of the superior who would govern it by delegation from the Abbot General. The 1962 Chapter decided that henceforth the community would elect its own abbot, just like all the other communities. The Abbot General would only be the Father Immediate. (See chapter 1, §§1.5 and 1.6, above).

SUMMARY TABLE

Year	Date	Dom Sortais and the Cistercian Order	External Events
1902	September 22	Birth of André Sortais, near Paris	
1914	August 2		First World War
1918	November 11		Armistice
1920		Begins architecture school	
1924	August 2	Enters Bellefontaine	
1926	August 20	First profession	
1929	August 20	Solemn Profession (sick in the infirmary)	
1931	June 29	Ordained priest (was deacon from May 30)	
1932	Autumn	Dom Jean-Baptiste Auger's prior	
1936	May 5	Elected abbot of Bellefontaine at 33 years of age	
1939	March 2		Election of Pius XII
	September	Mobilization as military chaplain	Beginning of Second World War
1940	Late May	Wounded at battle of Lille. Prisoner, Oflag II D	
1941	January 29		
1945		Repatriated. Return to Bellefontaine on March 11 Interventions in the liberation committee	May 8, capitulation of Germany
1946	May 1	General Chapter. Dom Nogues elected Abbot General Dom Sortais elected Abbot Vicar	
1950	September 21		Apostolic Constitution *Sponsa Christi*
1951		First foundation in sub-Saharan Africa	Restoration of the Paschal Vigil
	September 14	Resignation of Dom Dominique Nogues	
	November 13	Election of Dom Sortais as Abbot General	
1952	Winter 1952–1953	First trip to the USA, Far East, and Canada. Operation in Canada: removal of a kidney	
1953	November 9	Provisional decree on adaptations	
1955	December 8	Second trip to Far East and Africa (7 months)	Simplification of the Rubrics
1956	June 27	Final decree on adaptations	Apostolic Constitution Sedes Sapientiae Reform of Holy Week
1957	Winter	Hospitalized again at Montreal	
1958	Spring	Beginning of constructions at Monte Cistello where they moved in 1959	October 9, death of Pius XII October 28, election of John XXIII
1959	June	First meeting of abbesses at Cîteaux	January: announcement of a Council
1960	October	Consecration the church at Monte Cistello	Visit of John XXIII at Monte Cistello
1961	June	Health crisis after long voyage. Operation, then rest until the first months of 1962	
1962		The General Chapter at Rome deals with lay brother question. Visit of John XXIII	October 11: opening of Council
1963	June 3 & 21		Death of John XXIII, election of Paul VI
	November 13	Dom Sortais' death at around 9:30 p.m.	

5.3. THE UNIFICATION OF COMMUNITIES: THE LAY BROTHER QUESTION

(*by Dom Ambrose Southey*)[22]

Since many in the Order have joined since 1966 when the so-called Decree of Unification was published it would be better to give a brief description of the Brothers' life before that date. According to the Constitutions they were not monks although they took solemn vows. Once they had entered the novitiate they were never permitted to change over to the Choir. They rose at the same time as the Choir religious and recited their Office of Paters and Aves. They then did some *lectio divina* and served or attended masses. They took breakfast together and went to work. They did not attend Chapter or the High Mass except on Sundays and big feast days. They had no voting rights. After the midday meal they did the washing up, unless a particular brother was given this task. They came to Compline in their own stalls. On the whole they fasted as the Choir religious. It was a very hard and humble vocation.

There is a document in the archives at Mount Saint Bernard Abbey written in 1851 by Fr. Bernard Burder who later became abbot. He was Master of the Lay Brothers and he raises a number of queries about the Brothers' vocation and even suggests that it might be good to have only one class, although he goes on to say that the brothers at Mount Saint Bernard are quite happy. He felt that the whole question needed to be studied.

It seems that no investigation was made for a century. While Dom Dominique Nogues was Abbot General there was some talk of discussing the situation of the Brothers, but he said he would resign if this were done (see the French minutes of the 1955 General Chapter, p.53).

But Dom Gabriel became Abbot General in 1951, and he did raise the question of the Brothers. The General Chapter of 1953 made a number of decisions giving the Brothers a much greater participation in the Liturgy and in the life of the community (see the French minutes, pp.15–17). At the Chapter of 1956 the Abbot General spoke about a Decree from the Holy See on June 27. Among other things, it confirmed the decisions concerning the Brothers taken at the 1953 Chapter (see the French minutes, 1956, p.20).

22 Dom Ambrose was Abbot of Mount Saint Bernard (England) from July 1959 until May 7, 1974, the date on which he was elected Abbot General. He resigned from that office in September 1990. He was Promoter of the General Chapters of 1967 and 1974.

At the following Chapter (1957), five more decisions concerning the Brothers were taken, having mainly to do with Liturgy (see the French minutes, p.16).

On April 19 1960 Dom Gabriel wrote a long letter to the Abbots and Superiors about what he called "the problem of the Lay Brothers." It should be said at the outset that Dom Gabriel had a great love for the Brothers and never envisaged their disappearance.

The letter is divided into two sections. The first begins by asking: Is there a real problem? He says that many will hold that there is a problem in several countries (Belgium and Holland) but not in the Order as a whole. He then goes on to show that this is not true. In the period from 1900 to 1955, the proportion of Brothers to Choir Religious had dropped from 57% to 38.6%. If one takes into account the ages of the Brothers and the rate of entries one can see that in most countries the proportion will continue to fall. He admits that the U.S.A. is an exception, but there are special reasons for this. So he concludes that there is a real problem.

He then asks *why* there should be such a drop. He thinks that one cause is modern life. Domestic servants are disappearing as well as illiterate persons. There is a stress on active participation in the Liturgy. So the Brothers' vocation does not have the appeal that it used to have. In addition the modern spirit calls for unity and equality in communities, and it does not seem authentic to try to maintain a form of life that was historically determined. Despite these problems it could be argued that the Brothers' vocation has survived for many centuries and the present moment is only a passing setback. Traditional ideas might return, so be patient and do not embark on rash changes that will ultimately prove to have been erroneous. Against this, others argue that the institution of the Lay Brothers was closely linked to a certain period of history that has now passed. As proof of their position they point to recent foundations in regions where one might expect the Brothers' vocation to be accepted. But experience has shown the opposite. It is at this point that Dom Gabriel starts the second section of the letter. He talks about foundations made in tropical countries (nowadays we would say "foundations made in the Young Churches"). An examination of the situation in these foundations leads him to conclude that, although the reasons are somewhat different, there is a problem with the Brothers' vocation. Finally he asks the abbots to co-operate with him by reflecting on what he has written and telling him whether they agree that there is a problem and whether it is time to face up to it.

He foresees that some abbots will think that there is a problem but that it is not very urgent and can be settled by a few adaptations. He rejects this as an easy way out, and recalls the arguments already advanced. For him the problem is deeper than that. We have to find a new form stripped of its historical elements and thus suitable for the present age. However he makes it clear that he has no intention of

suppressing the Brothers. That would be an erroneous solution. But the question seems urgent to him and he thinks that in some monasteries a problem is already emerging for the Choir religious due to a lack of Brothers.

At the General Chapter held later the same year Dom Gabriel said that 38 of the 45 Superiors who had written to him agreed that there is a problem and some had suggested interesting solutions. He invited those who had not yet written to do so and then he would send another circular letter in 1961.

In actual fact, the promised letter was not sent until June 13, 1962, since some abbots had requested more time to study the whole affair. It is a long letter of twenty-five pages and it would take too long to describe in detail. The majority of Superiors agreed that the Lay Brothers' vocation must be retained although some changes were necessary. After explaining a number of suggestions Dom Gabriel sums them up by making a comparison of two solutions (see pp.20–21 of the letter. Only a summary translation has been made here).

First Solution	**Second Solution**
Maintain present structures	*Modify present structures*
For Choir religious	Monks with choral obligation
For Lay Brothers	Monks without choral obligation
Suppress mention that Brothers are not monks	All are monks
Suppress prohibition to transfer	Allow transfers to Choir
Same habit for all	Same habit for all
Common scriptorium	Common scriptorium
Rank according to entry	Rank according to entry,
except in Church	in Church priests precede
Right of vote in most cases	All have right of vote
Brothers exempt from fasts of the Order	All bound by fasts unless dispensed
Different timetable unless going to almost all Offices	Two timetables according to functions
Common novitiate	Common novitiate
Profession rite for Brothers much as for Choir	Profession rite identical for all
Attendance at Abbot's Chapter more frequently	All attend Abbot's Chapter daily
Brothers sometimes on Abbot's Council	Brothers sometimes on Abbot's Council
Brothers may be given any job not requiring priesthood	Brothers may be given any job not requiring priesthood
Brothers participating more in functions at Office and High Mass	Brothers participating more in functions at Office and High Mass

Dom Gabriel pointed out that one can see from this table that there is a convergence on many matters between the two solutions. This convergence shows a desire to unite as far as possible the Brothers with the Choir religious while maintaining a diversity of vocations. However, the way of envisaging this unity varies according to the solutions.

In his long conclusion Dom Gabriel stresses that a mere modification of exterior conditions will not be sufficient unless it is accompanied by a change of heart. It is an improvement in the spiritual life of both Lay Brothers and Choir religious that should be our ultimate aim.

At the General Chapter in September of the same year (1962) two votes were taken after listening to the reports of the four Commissions. By 52 votes to 12 it was decided to change the status quo of the Brothers and by 45 votes to 19 the assembly preferred to position itself in favour of the second solution. But the next day the Abbot General pointed out that these votes were only an orientation. Further study would be necessary before coming up with a concrete statute embodying the second solution.

How things would have turned out if Dom Gabriel had lived we will never know. Unfortunately he died on November 13, 1963. An extraordinary General Chapter was convoked and it met from January 16–19, 1964. Dom Ignace Gillet was elected as the new Abbot General. At that Chapter a number of votes were taken about the Brothers. First of all the Commissions discussed whether the Order should ask the Holy See unofficially whether it were possible to suppress the obligation of solemnly professed to recite the Canonical Office. From the discussion it was eventually decided to postpone a vote on the subject until the next day. On January 18 some abbots held that Dom Gabriel's project to allow the Brothers to participate in the Divine Office involved a substantial change in their vocation and was not what they had understood in voting for the second solution at the previous Chapter. However, when a vote was taken, it confirmed by 45 votes to 15 the vote of the previous Chapter in favour of the second solution, which envisaged just one class of monks and a change of structures. Further, by 32 votes to 28, it was decided to consult the communities, both Brothers and Choir religious, on the idea of a change of structures. Later on the same day a text to be submitted unofficially to the Holy See about the obligation of saying the Divine Office, etc., was accepted. And on January 19 it was decided to set up a commission to study the results of the consultation of the communities and the reply of the Holy See to the enquiry about the Office. It was also agreed that the Brothers, with an indult from Rome, from now on could wear the same habit as the Choir religious (see French minutes, 1964, pp. 8–13).

On November 25 of the same year a document was sent from the Definitory

giving the result of the consultation. Some communities urged caution since their Brothers were not keen on any great changes. There was a unanimous agreement to allow the Brothers a greater participation in the Choir Office, although some made it depend on permission to use the vernacular. There was also unanimity on allowing the Brothers to be appointed to any employment (except those that demanded the priesthood) and also to have equal voting rights. There were mixed opinions in regard to the timetable, the question of formation, the use of names and the habit. In general there was agreement about rank of seniority except in Church where the priests would have precedence.

From December 2–15, a commission of 15 abbots together with the Abbot General met at Rome to discuss three points: aggiornamento in the Order, the integration of Choir monks and Lay-Brothers into one class of monks, and the programme of the next General Chapter. The report of this commission runs to 94 pages and would take too long to summarize. However, 23 votes were taken on the unification of the two classes, and they give an idea as to the opinions of the commission.

In the voting it was allowed to vote *juxta modum*. The votes were based on the reaction of the commission to a document drawn up by Dom Gabriel Sortais before his death, which I have not been able to see.

1 Do you agree that there will be only one postulancy and one novitiate in each community with the same ceremonies of introduction, taking of the habit and simple profession in the vernacular?* Result: 15 yes, 1 no.

2 Do you wish that the rite, ceremonies and vows at solemn profession should be identical for all? Result: 15 yes, 1 juxta modum.

3 Should the profession formula be "secundam Regulam" or " secundam Regulam et Constitutiones O.C.S.O.? Result: 7 for former, 9 for latter.

4 Do you wish all to receive the cowl? Result: 15 yes, 1 juxta modum.

5 a) Should all receive the clerical tonsure?
Result: 4 yes, 12 no.
b) Should all receive the rite of the monastic tonsure?
Result: 15 yes, 1 no.

6 Do you wish the tonsure in the form of a crown?
Result: 2 yes, 9 no, 5 juxta modum.

7 In order to give the future professed a definite guarantee as to his future life in regard to assistance in choir should there not be in his request before solemn profession a description of his life so far and his desire to live it in the future?
Result: 9 yes, 5 no and 2 juxta modum.

8 Do you wish that in principle all should participate in the conventual Mass?
Result: 15 yes, I juxta modum.

9 Do you wish that in principle all should participate at:
Lauds? Result: 4 yes, 2 no, 10 juxta modum (i.e. if Lauds is in the vernacular)
Vespers? Result 1 yes, 7 no, 8 juxta modum (i.e. if Vespers is in the vernacular)
Compline? Result: 13 yes, 3 juxta modum.

10 Should this participation be obligatory for a monk in whose life work is predominant?
Result: 3 yes, 11 no, 2 juxta modum.

11 Should all be obliged to participate on Sundays and feasts at all the Choir Offices from Lauds on ? Result: 5 yes, 8 no, 3 juxta modum (i.e. if in the vernacular.)

12 Do you agree that all the solemnly professed should have the active right to vote in Chapter? Result: 15 yes, I juxta modum.

13 Common Scriptorium? Result: 15 yes, 1 no.

14 Common dormitory? Result: 15 yes, 1 no.

15 Rank according to seniority outside choir? Result: 14 yes, 1 no, 1 juxta modum.

16 In principle, rank according to seniority even in Choir, but putting the priests first and allowing the Superior a certain liberty in organising things?
Result: 12 yes, 4 juxta modum.

17 The commission was unanimous in leaving each country to decide according to its mentality on the names of "Father" and "Brother."

18 By 12 to 4 it was suggested that all the solemnly professed should have passive vote, positis ponendis. This means: except in the cases where some special condition is demanded, i.e. the priesthood.

19 By 13 votes to 3 juxta modum it was suggested that all the solemnly professed might form part of the Abbot's Council. The juxta vote meant that it was desired that a minimum of priests should be members.

20 The commission unanimously agreed that no Brother should ever be obliged to change, even in regard to the habit.

21 By 15 to 1 a desire was expressed that a way should be found so that a Brother wanting to accept the new status, if possible, need not make a new profession.

22 Dom Gabriel had suggested that there should be a delay of five years during which the Brothers would be able to experience their new life before being admitted to Choir. By 14 to 1 and 1 juxta modum the commission preferred not to specify five years, but to speak of a delay, without specifying its duration.

23 The commission unanimously agreed to leave each Superior free to decide the best moment to put the schema into practice in his house.

These votes are to be found on pp. 46, 47 and 53 of the report.

At the General Chapter of 1965 it was noted that a number of houses were due to have an abbatial election soon and it was asked whether we should obtain an indult so that the Brothers might vote at these elections. After discussions in the commissions, by 62 votes to 2 the Chapter voted in favour of this move.

The Chapter then asked all the commissions to state their position in regard to the 23 votes which had been put before the special commission of abbots in December 1964. The votes 1,2,8,12-17,19–21 were all accepted. The others were left for further discussion. While these points were being discussed votes were taken on the text to be submitted to the Holy See on the whole question of unification. This text is not given in its entirety in the minutes of the Chapter, but it can be put together here, although it appears on different pages of the minutes:

> The General Chapter of the Order of Cistercians of the Strict Observance meeting at Cîteaux under the presidency of the Abbot General, Dom Ignace Gillet, humbly submits to the kind consideration of the Sacred Congregation of Religious the following question: Since 1960, the General Chapter has been carefully studying the problem of the unification of the two classes of religious which exist in our Order, namely the monks and the Lay Brothers. It would like from now on that all should be monks even if there is diversity in the way they share in monastic duties.
>
> The desire for this unification is strong in the Order; it is in agreement with the Rule of Saint Benedict, which does not have this distinction of two classes; it is also in agreement with tendencies to be found at the moment in the Church. Twice the General Chapter has voted by a very large majority in favour of this unification, and the Reverend Mother Abbesses at their meeting in Cîteaux in June, 1964, almost unanimously decided in the same sense.
>
> But there is a very great obstacle to this unification, moreover almost the only obstacle, namely the obligation to the Divine Office, whether in choir or in private, above all if it is fulfilled in Latin. This obligation cannot possibly be imposed on everyone who will henceforth enter the Order; still less can we think of imposing it on the existing Brothers.
>
> If we do not find a solution to this difficulty, the problem of unification, as the Law stands at present, will be insoluble, to the great spiritual detriment of the Order. Accordingly, the General Chapter, having studied the question at great length and taken a secret vote, proposes to the Sacred Congregation of Religious the following solution, which was adopted by 56 votes to 9.

1 In view of the different circumstances in which our monasteries throughout the world find themselves, and because of the novelty and importance of this unification, the General Chapter asks that the favours requested below be granted by the Holy See for five years in the form of an indult *ad experimentum*, leaving each Superior free to decide when the appropriate moment has come to apply the indult in his monastery. After this five years' experiment, things will be clearer than they are now, and we may then envisage legislation that might be uniform for the whole Order.
2 Henceforth there will be only one novitiate. The novices will devote themselves to the *Opus Dei*, *lectio divina* and manual work according to their call, their aptitudes and their attractions, in the measure determined by the abbot.
3 During their temporary vows, the young professed will continue their probation according to the same norms as during the novitiate, whilst taking up the studies that are called for.
4 Solemn profession will be made according to the Rule of Saint Benedict. As to the obligation of the Divine Office, our communities must each day discharge the entire Office in choir. Each member of our communities who is in Sacred Orders, even when legitimately absent from choir, must recite privately the canonical hours as discharged in choir. The other monks when absent from choir, will be bound to say one of the three Offices approved in our Order: the Canonical Office, the short Office approved by the Holy See (Rescript n. 1736/58), or the Office of the "Paters" which the Lay Brothers currently may say according to the Constitutions.
5 The Lay Brothers who have already made their solemn profession in the Order can become monks in the manner explained above without any further indult or period of probation. Those who freely elect the new Statute will receive the cowl and will sign an affidavit to be kept in the archives.
6 As to the Lay Brothers who are now in temporary vows, these may make solemn profession according to 4) above.
7 The same favours asked for the Lay Brothers are likewise requested for the feminine branch of the Order. Indeed, for our nuns the distinction into classes is even less justified.

The actual Decree of the Holy See in regard to the above text was given in Latin on December 27, 1965. It was translated into English as follows:

> The principal work of monks is to render service to the divine majesty, a service which is humble and still ranks high in the order of values. The work

is done inside the monastery's enclosure in a sheltered life entirely given up to worshipping God. It is with a view to encouraging with ever greater zeal the performance of this sacred duty, with a view also of fastening ever more closely the bonds of brotherly union, that the Abbot General of the Order of Reformed Cistercians, supported by the votes of the General Chapter, has submitted a humble request that the existence of one single class of religious should be restored in the Order. It is asked that all of them should be monks, contributing their united efforts, either directly or indirectly, to the celebration of the Divine Office.

This Sacred Congregation has weighed every aspect of the matter in the spirit of the second Ecumenical Vatican Council. Accordingly it is glad to grant this favour requested, and give its confirmation and approval to what follows in the terms of the present Decree.

1 There is to be only one class of religious in the Order. All are monks; monastic formation is given on the same lines; rights and duties are to be the same. It follows that the only difference which is to remain is that which arises from the various functions to which monks may be appointed, in consideration of the special vocation given them by the Lord or of their individual capacity. However the Abbot, Prior and Novice-Master are to be chosen from among the priests.

2 The monastery's special work is the celebration of the Divine Office. In St. Benedict's words, "it is the work to which nothing should be preferred" (cf. Monks' Constitutions n.77; Nuns' Constitutions n.51). Consequently all should co-operate in this choral celebration in their own way directly or indirectly.

3 All monks in sacred orders, even if they are lawfully absent from choir, are bound to the whole of the Divine Office. Any who are not in sacred orders and are assigned to the choir must every day recite privately those canonical Hours from which they may have been lawfully absent. This is in accordance with the Constitution of the Second Vatican Council, *De Sacra Liturgia*, n.95 c, and the Instruction given for its implementation, n.78 a); and it holds good unless, in the Abbot's judgement, there is any special reason to the contrary. Those brethren who are not assigned to the choir, in case they should not have been present in choir, are bound to recite one of the following, as the Abbot may arrange:

a) the Divine Office;
b) the shorter Office, approved by the Holy See;
c) the so-called "*Officium conversorum*", in accordance with the Constitutions

4 Those who have already made profession for the class of "Conversi", are free to remain in the state which they have chosen.

5 This Decree is to be applied to the nuns of the Order in its essentials and with the necessary adjustments.

Anything contrary to this Decree is to be declared without effect.

Given at Rome on the 27th day of December, in the year of Our Lord 1965.

Paul Philippe Secretary — Cardinal Antoniutti Prefect

It should be pointed out that the Cardinal attached a personal letter to the Decree in which he left the Abbot General, in conjunction with his Council, to decide when the Decree would come into force and also to permit a postponement of application to some houses which had special difficulties.

On January 13, 1966, the Abbot General sent a circular letter to the Superiors explaining the prolonged discussions with the Sacred Congregation which led up to the Decree—the text received was the eleventh draft! He also gave an authorized interpretation of the Decree and said it *could* come into force on reception of this letter but will only be obligatory from January 1, 1967.

The reaction in the Order to the Decree was not very warm. Some were distressed by the introduction of a new distinction—*choro addicti* and *choro non addicti*. Others complained that the idea of a monk put forward by the Sacred Congregation was applicable to Solesmes or Beuron but not to Cistercians. We have never agreed to the idea that "a monk was for the choir" even though we see the Divine Office as one of our principal obligations. Many Lay Brothers were very upset that a form of life which they had freely chosen was going to disappear. In fact a group of Abbots were chosen to come to Rome on February 9, 1966, to discuss the Decree. Four of these Abbots met with Msgr. Philippe a few days later to explain our reactions to the Decree. He was very cordial and agreed that we were not monks in the Solesmes sense. But no changes were made in the Decree as a result of this meeting.

The General Chapter of 1967 by 48 votes to 25 set up a commission to study the Decree. It also gave solemnly professed Lay Brothers (i.e. those who had not accepted the Decree) the right to vote in Chapter.

At the 1969 Chapter the Commission set up in 1967 gave a report. It held that there were three possible ways of proceeding: return to the project of 1965; work in the direction envisaged by the Decree; go back to the situation before the Decree and suppress the words in the Constitutions which said that the Brothers were not monks. The various commissions of the Chapter discussed these three possibilities and a few days later took six votes:

1 When a report on the Decree of Unification is presented to the Holy See a new text of the Decree will be proposed. Yes 37. No 38. 1 Abstention.
2 When a report on the Decree of unification is presented to the Holy See we will explain the difficulties we find in applying the Decree and we will say that an amended text is being prepared. Yes 61. No 15.
3 This new text will be prepared by the C.R.C. (i.e., the Commission for the drafting of the Constitutions) and studied by the Consilium Generale before being submitted to the next General Chapter for approval. Yes 68. No 7. 1 Abstention.
4 The General Chapter wishes the formula for solemn profession used in the Order to be studied again taking into account the Decree of Unification. Yes 62. No 13. 1 Abstention.
5 The General Chapter declares that the obligation to recite an Office is no greater for the *choro non addicti* than for the Lay Brothers. Yes 66. No 8. 2 Abstentions.
6 We wish that n. 173 of our Constitutions should be rewritten as: "Fratres Conversi in Ordine sunt. Voce activa gaudent." Yes 68. No 6. 2 Abstentions.

On April 8, 1970, a report was submitted to the Holy See. It gives a short history of how the Decree was accepted and points out that a desire for amendments was expressed on numerous occasions. But it then goes on to say that these desires are now much less since the revision of our Constitutions will give us the chance to express our thought more clearly. It points out that the Decree has brought spiritual profit to the Order. The application of the Decree was easier among the nuns than among the monks. Permission to use the vernacular at the Divine Office has helped a great deal. In some houses there are still some difficulties.

The new Constitutions, approved in 1990, explicitly mention the Lay Brothers only once, in Statute 6A, where they are recognized as members of the community. It has to do with those who retain their earlier status. The question of the unification of the community, in spite of a diversity of vocations and functions, which was addressed in the Decree of December 27, 1965, is thus resolved in Constitution 14.2:

> The equilibrium between the Work of God, prayer, *lectio divina* and manual work, essential to the Cistercian way of life, is determined according to the character, training and age of each. The abbot is to discern and moderate everything so that each brother may grow in the Cistercian vocation.

Statute 19.2B is more specific:

> In particular cases the abbot may determine the measure in which an individual monk participates in the Liturgy of the Hours in choir. This is done

> only after careful examination of the question with the brother himself and having regard to the needs of the community.

And Constitution 19.3 adds:

> A brother who was absent from the choral celebration is to acquit himself of the Hours according to the instructions of the abbot and the norms of universal law.

At the 1993 General Chapter a Lay Brother from Gethsemani gave a conference on the question of the Brothers. He put the matter very well and finished by quoting from a book by Fr. Nicholas of Sept-Fons: "If this authentic form of monastic life has been officially suppressed in the Order several years ago, the evidence of its necessity will automatically restore it, with the necessary adjustments."[23]

The Chapter spent a great deal of time discussing the whole question. A number of votes were taken (cf. Minutes in English, p.141). From these votes it was decided to draw up a Statute for Lay Brothers similar to the Statute for Oblates. Later in the Chapter three more votes were taken which resulted in the Law Commission being asked to draw up the Statute (see pp.166–67). As for the statute prepared by the law commission, which would not have been obligatory, it was found to be useless, and was rejected by the 1996 General Chapter.

As a conclusion to this long account one may legitimately ask: "How was it that Dom Gabriel and the majority of abbots, who had no intention of suppressing the Brothers' vocation, ended up by doing so?" It has been said that if Dom Gabriel had lived he would not have allowed it to happen. This is by no means clear. He and many of the abbots did not seem to realize that once the juridical status of the Brothers was changed it would destroy the structure of their lives. Also it would seem that some abbots were in favour of the disappearance of the Brothers.

Some Superiors and Novice Masters still feel that we are losing vocations because of the unification. If this is true then we need a genius who will be able to formulate a type of life similar to that of the old Brothers, but stripped of its historical trappings.

(Throughout this chapter everything has been in the masculine, but it applies equally to the nuns, *positis ponendis*.)

23 Père Jérôme, *L'art d'être disciple* (Paris: Fayard, 1989) 125, note 6.

5.4. TESTIMONIALS FROM TWO LAY BROTHERS ON THE EVENTS OF THIS PERIOD

5.4.1. Memories of a Brother Who Was and Still Is a Lay Brother

(*by Br. Aimable Flipo*)[24]

1933—Before my entrance to the monastery, I made a twenty-four hour retreat and then another of six days. Father Prior came to see me each day and he had given me the "Directory," the "Rule," and the "Usages" to read. I attended the offices in the tribune. No contact with the community. The Church was not open to the public, with the exception of the tribune for men. Women were not admitted; the mother of a religious could not attend any ceremony, profession or ordination.

Lay brother—In the only conversation that I had with the master of the choir novices, it was decided that I would be a lay brother. If I had chosen the vocation of a choir brother, it would have been necessary to do two years of Latin in a seminary for late vocations.

Novitiate—The choir novices had a separate novitiate. The lay brother novices lived with the professed lay brothers, and were formed by the Father Master of the lay brothers. During the 1939–1945 war, choir and lay brother novices were put together in a single novitiate with a single Novice Master.

Work of the lay brothers—In general, they were responsible for the workshops, the fields and the various employments of the community. The lay brother novices (before 1940) went to work together with the Father Master in the afternoon. In the morning, they went to help those who were responsible in the different employments—wardrobe, garden, etc., and I always had the impression that, in general, these latter also felt responsible for the novices.

Information—Before 1940, news, very rare and very limited, came from the Father Abbot at Chapter or from the Master of the lay brothers. The workers brought some in also, but in general, as few of the brothers spoke to the workers and these latter knew our regulations, we learned very little. A relative had given me a subscription to a magazine of an "Association of St. Joseph," loved and venerated in the community, but the Father Abbot asked me to stop the subscription. Was this

24 Born December 23, 1913; entered Mont-des-Cats on October 3, 1933; temporary profession as a lay brother on October 5, 1937, and solemn profession on June 20, 1943. He oversaw the building of Belval, 1950–1957, and of *Monte Cistello*, 1958–1959, and was responsible for various temporal matters. He was cellarer of Mont-des-Cats, 1963–1968.

the spirit of enclosure and recollection that would only give place to a spiritual and Cistercian life? I did not suffer from it and today I am even grateful to those who were responsible for this formation.

Silence and signs—It is unfortunate that the use of signs has almost completely disappeared, not only for the silence that it facilitated, but also for the welcome into the community of brothers from another country who did not know our language and came to live with us for quite a long time, for instance for studies. In 1946, a group of 6 monks went to Frattocchie to reinforce the community: thanks to the use of signs, the contact was immediate, before any comprehension of Italian.

Unification—Cellarer at Frattocchie and then at the Generalate, I met Dom Dominique Nogues, Dom Sortais, and Dom Gillet in Rome. Several times, Dom Sortais spoke with me about the situation of the lay brothers. He appreciated the vocation of the lay brother very much, but sought to eliminate the external differences that distinguished the lay brother from the choir brother, those that shocked relatives or friends, such as the obligation of the beard or the color of the habit. Why couldn't the lay brothers vote, at least for the election of the abbot? Why did their professions take place in Chapter and not in the Church?

And there were even other particularities, but I never felt in his words a desire for unification, for the suppression of the vocation of the lay brother; rather, I felt a desire to allow it to continue.

In 1968 I returned to my community because of fatigue. Unification had happened but the decree of 1965 authorized me to remain in my "condition" of lay brother. We are five brothers in this situation. I did not find again the numerous "family of brothers" as in former times, nor Vespers which were prayed together in the work place in two rows, as the usages directed. As at *Monte Cistello*, where we were only a few brothers, I have found a certain situation of "solitude" in the vocation. Nothing dramatic; an adaptation to solitude and communion. Today, in 2004, I believe I have come to terms with this situation by the grace of God.

Chanting the offices—After 70 years of monastic life, I believe I can affirm that the vocation of lay brother was really what the Lord wanted for me. I never wanted to be a choir monk, nor had a serious temptation to leave the Order, despite military service, the war, captivity in Germany, and the very distracting jobs that were entrusted to me. I know, today, that I have no aptitude for the choir. I am not insensitive to music and I prefer Gregorian chant to what we sing at present, but I think I have a certain allergy to the chant and I ask myself: if I had been accepted as a choir monk, would I have persevered in the Cistercian life?

5.4.2. Some Reflections on My Life at Sept-Fons Before and After the Second Vatican Council

(*by Br. Félicien Scandella*)[25]

I entered Sept-Fons for the first time just before Pentecost, 1947, but due to the precarious situation of my family, I had to leave Sept-Fons almost right away to help my father, since I was the eldest of nine children. This situation lasted for five years. I then returned to Sept-Fons in the beginning of May, 1952. I was twenty-seven years old, in perfect health and with the appetite of three lions! Thanks be to God, my health held up well, while on the contrary my appetite was well mortified.

I think I must have read or heard it said that before the Council Sept-Fons was considered to be one of the strictest monasteries in regard to discipline. I know from experience that there is truth in this. And more than a little! Surely such rigor has not led to my death, since after more than fifty years I am still living—and how!, at close to 200 pounds! However, the body and the heart, each in their turn, had to undergo suffering. I will only give a few of the most salient examples, for the body first and then for the heart.

I was received as one of the lay brothers, and as lay brothers we had favored treatment in regard to nourishment. Oh, that didn't go very far: some ten extra grams of bread, a very, very little bit of cheese, hardly enough to budge the needle of the scales . . . it was pitiable to see! And the highlight of the day, so to speak, was the evening collation. Three times a week we had three spoonfuls of dried beans with a mere thimble of oil, and that after a full day of work and fatigue, with my three lions roaring their hunger inside of me! And I, who saw the venerable choir fathers leaving the refectory after just barely entering it, I asked the Lord regarding those good fathers, "How, Lord, are they ever able to sustain the body?" As for myself, of course, I took my time, I chewed slowly, "ruminated" as much as I could to let nothing be lost. I believe that what saved my life was my mug of wine. God saw my distress, and He always took care of it for me. He knew my Italian origins, Bergamese! There are certainly many other details one could speak about concerning the food, but let us go on to the subject of *hygiene*.

Hygiene also left something to be desired. When I left the monastery in 1947, I used to come back all the same every year to spend my vacation at Sept-Fons, and this was always during the months of July and August, the time of harvest

25 Born November 15, 1925; entered Sept-Fons on May 22, 1952; made temporary profession on November 28, 1954, and solemn profession on December 27, 1957. He signed the Decree of Unification.

and . . . of heat! I was in civilian clothes: pants, shirt, jacket. I was in the midst of my brethren, and when I saw them covered with sweat under their robes, I didn't dare take off my jacket. Oh, my God, what heat, what agony! The example of my brethren was what made me hold out! In the evening I would think, "At least they will take a good shower!" The answer to this I had in 1952.

So it was in 1952 when I finally reentered Sept-Fons that I learned that showers indeed existed, but were "distributed" sparingly and with permission. I shall go on to tell of the cold and even temperate seasons, but during the three months of intense heat, with hard and heavy labor such as harvesting grain or hay—for at that time everything was done by hand, far from the mechanization of today—well, despite that, we were allowed to take one foot-bath and one shower per week with permission. This is almost, but on another level, just like my three spoonfuls of dried beans in the evening!

And our poor brothers, who worked all day long on the farm and in the stable, had plenty of time to collect upon themselves all the good aromas of the produce of the earth, and to come and offer them to the Holy Virgin, enveloped in the beautiful melodies of the *Salve*! For the lay brothers did not come into choir with the choir monks except in the evening, after Compline, for the singing of the *Salve*. The very first times I did this, I watched our good fathers out of the corner of my eye to see what their reaction might be. To my astonishment and to my amazement, they remained unperturbed. And I am saying nothing about all the perspiration drying on our backs. And we continued on, endured, and held on in spite of everything!

After the heat, came the *cold*!

When I reentered Sept-Fons, absolutely no place was heated. I was still young, twenty-seven years old, but I can assure you that I suffered from the cold. Even though it wasn't Siberia, it was cold enough at Sept-Fons, at least when the seasons passed normally, getting down to around 10 to 15 degrees (Fahrenheit) every winter. When we entered the church for Matins, we felt like a cope of lead had fallen on our shoulders. Being as tepid as I was, I had two goals: to pray the least badly I could, and to protect myself as well as possible against the cold. But I leave all that to the mercy of the Lord.

Another place where I suffered from the cold was the refectory. Our meals were always served individually before the community came in. Our poor meal had plenty of time to absorb the surrounding temperature, and when we entered the refectory, all our eyes at once went to all those slices speckled with frost! Everything about this refectory was sorry and cold: the room temperature, the frost, the nearly cold meal, and especially the fact that there was nothing to lighten the heart, for one like myself who had come from a numerous family of eighteen chil-

dren counting siblings and cousins, where there was only laughter, jokes, and joy. In re-reading this, only now do I realize that I forgot something: if one place, one single location was heated, and well heated, it was . . . *the calefactory*!

Some personal reflections: I then made solemn profession on December 27, 1957, which was during the Christmas season and the day of the feast of Saint John. Solemn profession, feast day, and day of rejoicing in heaven as on earth, and as each one of us belongs to both heaven and earth, I would have liked it so much if this portion of earth which is mine, my heart within, could have had some small way to share the joy and honor, at least for this celebration which happens only once in a lifetime. Yes, that's true, of course, but there it was . . . that day was a Friday, and therefore the Usages, the customs and the Rule took precedence. And so nothing whatever for the body, nor even three flowers for the heart! Surely, I took this as a lesson for myself: "Little one", I said to myself, "you have embraced this Rule, so you had best follow it well"! But all the same . . . all the same! When I think of what we do today! How hard it is to keep to the middle way!

For visits from close family, we were provided one visit of three full days, but once a year. Fine. For large families, many persons could come in the group, but in any case only once a year and . . . that was it! Nothing could be said about this, as about all the rest besides. In the beginning, everything went rather well; in the course of two years I was able to see all my family. But at that point things began to go wrong. One year my eldest sister was missing; reason: a stay in the hospital. The next year, no sister, same reason. The third year, again no eldest sister, again for the same reason. Well, I waited for twelve years before seeing this sister again. I have to say that this sister, my sister who had my full admiration and was my pride, had undergone thirty-four operations. After each operation there was a convalescence; after that, the times for family visits had ended, and so no more visiting! Surely the Rule was sound and safe, but what about elementary charity?

These are some facts about community life before the Second Vatican Council that have struck me personally. Of course there were many other things, but as I have no more remembrance of them, and seeing the difficulty I have in expounding my poor thoughts on a piece of paper, I will end by saying a few words about after the Council.

For myself, everything went very well, smoothly, and with a certain feeling of well-being. Every year in Chapter we used to read a passage from the Constitutions of the Order which said that the lay brothers had all the rights "*except that they were not monks*". Interiorly, I was furious! After all, to whom is the title of monk to be given? To someone who chants psalms in choir day and night all his life, or to someone who wishes to gather up his whole life, absolutely all of it, and

offer it to the Lord alone? As for me, from the very first day of my entrance into the monastery I felt myself to be a monk, by all means!

And so here we are after the Council. My God, what a difference! I may say that I have lived in the two extremes! I experienced the strictness of spirit, on the one hand, where all was centered on the Rule, the Usages and customs, without comprehending that at times certain dispensations were in order only to pour a little bit of the oil of charity into the midst of all that rigidity. I have seen and lived in the opposite extreme. Which is better? The exact middle, not so easy, all right!

What is good and salutary in the changes that took place after the Council is to see, to believe, to feel ourselves to be in one and the same family. This was very beneficial to me. Before the Council we were like two communities in one: the choir monks had their Mass towards the middle of the morning; we lay brothers had our Mass very early in the morning before work. The choir monks had their office; we lay brothers, our own. The choir monks had their Chapter every morning with Father Abbot; we lay brothers had ours three times a week with the Father Master of the Brothers, and so on. For myself, personally, I had always desired this union, and it did so much good in every way!

Thanks be to God that this has happened, and I thank Him for it with all my heart. And I likewise thank the Lord for having called me to this beautiful Cistercian life in spite of my faults and countless shortcomings!

5.5. TESTIMONIAL OF BR. CHRISTOPHE LEBRETON IN 1986[26]

On March 19, 1986, Br. Christophe sent the Abbot General three proposed modifications to the text of our Constitutions, which were to be revised and confirmed at the 1987 Chapter. The modifications were not accepted word for word, but equivalent ideas are found in the Constitutions. His proposal was accompanied by a reflection on the lay brother vocation, which is here reproduced in English translation.

It might be desirable for this "lay brother tradition" to flourish once again today in a unified community in which all are monks: called by the Lord to live out their vocation in a way determined (and protected) by the Constitutions, in the Church's new post-conciliar context. Allow me to share with you a conviction based on a certain amount of experience, because I have had occasion to benefit from a "status" similar in certain aspects to the life a lay brother, i.e., Pater and Gloria office, and manual labor. The attraction to it, I think, stems from the mystery of my vocation. I have therefore confided it and entrusted it to my Father Abbots (Fr. François de Sales, Fr. Jean-Baptiste at Atlas, Fr. Jean-Marc, and, most recently, Fr. Sébastien, before beginning my service at Dombes). I have also been able to take inspiration from the living example offered by lay brothers with whom I have lived in these various monasteries.

My original discovery of it comes from having seen "a brother who does not attend the office" immersed in prayer in the cloister near the church. So there was prayer outside of the choir, right there in the midst of life, and with no fancy appearances . . . I needed to know this, because my entrance to the monastery was preceded by a conversion of life; so I had doubts about an overly "angelic" life, and was surprised to find myself so quickly placed and settled (in-*stalled*) in the choir!

Within the mystery of this vocation, I also remember a special grace of prayer while working in the garden at Our Lady of Atlas (a grace I am far from being faithful to). It is the grace of the *Our Father*, an "ejaculatory" prayer, of course,

26 Born at Blois in 1950, he discovered the monastery of Tibhirine in Algeria when doing volunteer work (in place of military service). He made his novitiate at Tamié, 1974–1976, and then went to Algeria. But he returned to Tamié in the autumn of 1977, and made his profession there in 1980. He was sent with some other brothers to help out at Dombes; it was at that time that he wrote Dom Ambrose Southey the letter here transcribed. In 1987, he returned permanently to Tibhirine, where he was ordained priest in 1990. Along with the prior, Christian de Chergé, and five other brothers, he was abducted by a group of armed men, and killed along with the others on May 21, 1996. A collection of his poems was published in 1997 (*Aime jusqu'au bout du feu*), and his journal of the years 1993 and 1996 were published in 1999 (*Le souffle du don*).

but whose words come to us from Jesus, carried by his Breath, and offered to the Father. I love this prayer, and I love saying it "together," repeating it as a "choir," according to a simple but real ritual, which is like a copy of the Liturgy of the Church reduced to the essentials: an opening, bows, prayer, and the Word of God in the Our Father and doxologies. It is a fine school of the Lord's service, able to form one's life in the likeness of Jesus, the Servant, the Beloved Son of the Father. And that way one remains close to people of limited means, being to some extent in communion with their poverty.

There you have some points of personal experience . . . which nonetheless lead me to think that this vocation—misunderstood by some abbots, who perhaps do not value it or are even afraid of it—remains indefinable. I see an explanation for this attitude is the fact that the lay brother vocation has always been perceived in the negative: non-monks, because non-cloistered, non-choir brothers, and non-literate. Well, they were also called *barbati* (bearded)!

In the Middle Ages, the *Exordium of Cîteaux* says of them: "We receive them as companions and helpers, in the same way we receive monks; they are our brothers, and they take part in both our spiritual and material goods, just like the monks."[27]

Finally, I have the impression that our times are favorable for monastic life. There are vocations, and it is advisable to meet their needs according to the Lord's will, for he is both the initiator and the goal. We therefore need criteria of discernment, affirmed by the Order has a whole and faithful to the living charism of our Founding Fathers. The carrying out of this discernment cannot be left to the abbot of the monastery alone. It is therefore indispensable to mention the lay brother in our Constitutions. I hope that our Order will be able to accept a rich pluralism both for persons on the way toward holiness and for communities in their human and spiritual health. Our life is *Good News* because Jesus the Lord is ALIVE. May this way of life remain accessible to the little, to the humble . . . and to the rich called to convert. Woe to those who close the door of the Kingdom to those who are the first to be invited. Happy are we to live united as brothers and sisters in the House of God, the Church.

27 [The passage is actually from the *Capitula* (20)—Ed.]

CONCLUSION

CHAPTER SIX

The Expansion of the Order from 1892 to the Close of the Council (December 1965)

N.B. Mention will be made of provisional annex houses and refuge houses set up by communities threatened with eviction (especially in the wake of French legislation from 1880–1901), only if the superior was a *member of the General Chapter* (as in the case of Reciça)—which implied a certain official recognition, even if the house did not have *sui iuris* status—or if the house was later recognized as a foundation in the strict sense (as in the case of Calvaire). Names in bold type indicate communities that have been dissolved or absorbed into another community; names in italics indicate monasteries that still exist today, even if they have changed location.

6.1. AT THE STARTING POINT IN 1892

At the time of the union of the three Trappist Congregations in 1892, the Order numbered **54** houses of monks and **13** of nun, distributed as follows:

For the **monks**:
- 23 in France, i.e., 42.6%
- 21 in the rest of Europe, in eight countries, i.e., 38.9%
- 4 in North America (*Gethsemani*, *New-Melleray*, *Petit Clairvaux*, *Oka*), i.e. 7.4%
- 2 in the Near-East (*Latroun* and **Akbès**)
- 1 each in Algeria (**Staouëli**), China (*Consolation*), South Africa (**Mariannhill**), and Australia (**Beagle Bay**)

If Staouëli and the houses in North America and Australia are considered as belonging to Western culture, there remain only four houses in South Africa, the Near East, and the Far East; thus the Order was essentially "Western."

The **nuns** were nearly all French: 12 houses in France and 1 in Italy (*San Vito*). In 1904, the nuns of Maubec, who came back from Vaise in 1837 (=Vaise II), left for

Canada (*Assomption*). Two French houses (St-Paul-aux-Bois, evicted in 1904, and Cour-Pétral) settled in Belgium (present-day *Chimay* and *Clairefontaine*).

6.2. THE CLOSING OF MONASTERIES ALREADY IN EXISTENCE IN 1892

During the first half of the century, the General Chapter did not hesitate to close monasteries, which implies that foundations were perhaps made too quickly, without taking careful enough stock of the possibilities for growth or of political circumstances detrimental to the establishment of monasteries.

Fourteen houses of men were closed (or left the Order) between 1892 and December 1965:

Eight monasteries of men were closed, seven of them prior to 1930:

- **Bonrepos**: foundation of Neiges on a farm in the Gard region, which became a priory in 1892. The superior attended the Chapter of Union in 1892, but the foundation was reduced to the status of a grange of Neiges by decision of the 1896 General Chapter.[1]
- **Chambarand** (men): as a result of anti-clerical laws in France, the government had its eye on the monastery. Dom Chautard decided to take the monks to Sept-Fons, in order to avoid violent eviction. The monastery was sold in 1903.
- **Fontgombault**: for the same reasons, the monks went into exile in the USA.

> Twenty monks had already been welcomed at Gethsemani (at Mount Olivet, on the property of Gethsemani), and the abbot was blessed by Bishop Marre during the 1903 General Chapter. This abbot still attended the 1905 Chapter, even though the monastery had already been sold. The monks of Mount Olivet went to Jordan, Oregon, in 1904, but the General Chapter refused to give it canonical status as a foundation. The financial situation remaining precarious—unauthorized loans were taken, which generated debt—and there being insufficient personnel, the 1909 Chapter decided to close the monastery, based on Dom Obrecht's negative report. But the monks challenged this decision. The 1910 Chapter had to threaten them with canonical sanctions to get them to disperse. Several went to Lac at Oka; a few asked to be secularized. The abbot withdrew to a Benedictine monastery.

1 The fourth abbot of Neiges, Dom Augustin Martin (abbot 1912–1932) was a young oblate at Bonrepos. Bonrepos already existed as a grange of Neiges since 1870.

- **Grâce-Dieu** (men): the fate of Grâce-Dieu was linked to the fate of *Tamié*, both being foundations of Sept-Fons.

> In 1887, returning from exile in Austria, the community received the reinforcement of twelve monks from Tamié. But ten years later, Tamié was going downhill so fast that the 1904 General Chapter decided to close it. The clergy of Savoie saved the abbey, which, however, became a simple priory and then a "grange." By then Tamié had no more than three or four monks. However, the material situation of Grâce-Dieu deteriorated, and the abbey was expropriated by force to pay off the creditors. The monks, under the leadership of their abbot, Dom Augustin Dupic, withdrew to the Tamié grange in 1909, in hopes of taking over Hautecombe. But the deal failed, and in 1911, the rights of Grâce-Dieu passed permanently to Tamié, which was thus resurrected as an abbey, with Dom Augustin at its head.

- **La Double** (Échourgnac, men): the temporal situation of this monastery left much to be desired. The debts in the period 1908–1910 were not catastrophic, but, with two communities in bankruptcy (La Trappe and Tilburg), the General Chapter opted for prudence. Dom Chautard, who did not want to leave himself open to having a third case on his hands, urged that it be closed, and the 1910 Chapter did in fact decide to close it. The monks appealed to Rome, but the Holy See confirmed the closure in 1911.
- **Igny** (men): closed in 1927. The First World War left the monastery demolished. The community, which was small and had taken refuge on the property of Cîteaux, could not grow, and gave Igny (rebuilt by Bishop Marre) to the community of Laval for a foundation of nuns.
- **Divielle**: founded by Melleray in 1869 in the Landes region near Spain to gather the remaining Spanish monks from the Lestrange foundation of Santa Suzanna, which the anti-clerical government had closed in 1835. The Spanish monks left in 1880 to found what became Val-St-Joseph in 1889, and then moved to the ancient monastery of *La Oliva* in 1927. The Divielle community, with only the French members left, stagnated for fifty more years, and was finally closed in 1930. Closure was already being discussed in 1891.
- **Bonnecombe**: closed in 1965 before the end of the Council.

Six others were either closed or left the Order prior to 1952, and one community of nuns went out of existence.

- **Sacré-Coeur** in Australia (Beagle Bay): founded in 1891 by Sept-Fons, the monastery was later closed by Dom Chautard on account of the superior's health prob-

lems and the lack of personnel. The General Chapter gave permission to close in 1900. By 1903, the house no longer existed.

- **Mariannhill**: separated from the Order in 1909 (see the chapter on Bishop Marre, § 2.3.2).
- **Reciça**: refuge house of Sept-Fons, founded in Croatia in 1909. Its first superior was a member of the General Chapter,[2] which implied a certain juridical recognition. The house was closed in 1894.
- **Akbès** (Syria): During the First World War, its remaining ten monks took refuge at Maguzzano, Italy. The monastery was burned down, and the superior died. With no hope of recruitment, no monastery, and no superior, the community was dissolved in 1920. The rescript of closure is dated 1926. The liquidation of the property took place in 1935–1936. The situation was already critical in 1900, and the 1904 General Chapter had opted to close it, but the decision was postponed in 1905.
- **Staouëli**: fearing eviction as a consequence of anti-Congregation laws, the community transferred to the island of Majorca and then to Maguzzano, in the north of Italy, in 1903–1906. The transfer to Acey was decided on at the 1935 Chapter, but in the process, some of the monks criticized and revolted against the move. Finally, the 1936 Chapter decide to close the monastery.
- **Maria-Veen** (Westphalia, Germany): Founded by Oelenberg in 1888, this monastery always remained small.

  It had ties with a charitable institution that found work for young people in difficulties. This "camp association" provided the community's upkeep in exchange for religious services and personnel. The General Chapter, in 1894, and then again in 1900, authorized it to be raised to the rank of priory; an indult for the same purpose was obtained from the Holy See on January 16, 1901, and put into effect by the bishop on January 25, 1908.[3] The contract with this association was rather complex, and it was renewed in 1913. After the Second World War, the monastery was a provisional refuge house for German monks from various communities, especially Mariastern. Finally it was down to five lay brothers with stability, and the General Chapter of 1951 decided to close it. However, it took time to terminate the 1913 contract in terms that Oelenberg could afford. In 1952, there were still a few monks at Maria-Veen.

2 The prior was convoked to the Chapter of Union in 1892. He excused himself for health reasons.

3 But at the 1951 General Chapter, it was claimed that the monastery was never raised to the rank of priory. In any case, there was no election of a prior.

• **Macon**: this community of nuns transferred to Tremembe, Brazil, in 1907, and then settled at Feluy, Belgium, in 1920, before finally joining in with the foundation of Chambarand in 1931, thus losing its canonical existence.

6.3. FOUNDATIONS IN EUROPE FROM 1892 TO 1965

6.3.1. Men's communities

Until the beginning of the Second World War, Europe continued to be the place where most foundations were made: **12** of the **19** monks' foundations, of which only one was in France (i.e., the repurchase of Cîteaux in 1898). There were still **five** more up to 1966 (3 in Ireland, 1 in Scotland, and 1 in Spain).

Three of these foundations lasted only a short time:

• **Charneux**, annex house of Tilburg, started in 1902, was intended to be a refuge house for a French community.

It was turned over to Westmalle as a novitiate for Bamania (February–April, 1904), then became a foundation of Tilburg. The superior attended the 1905 General Chapter. It was closed in 1909.

• **Zemoniko** (Dalmatia), founded by Mariastern in 1897.

One of the conditions for this foundation was to educate twelve orphans. The community did not grow, the climate was unwholesome, and the buildings were dilapidated. There was, however, some question of transporting some of the monks of Mariastern there after the First World War. But the special visitors appointed by the 1920 Chapter opted to close it, which decision was put into effect in 1921.

• **Jacobsberg** (Ockenheim, near Bingen, Germany).

Echt made this foundation in 1921, for several German monks in the community, which was crowded at the time. They lived in provisional buildings up to the end of the Second World War. The community made its living by welcoming pilgrims, with a restaurant and refreshment stand, and the monks also had to engage in a certain amount of parochial apostolate. The General Chapter was worried about the situation, and even considered closing it in 1931 and 1935. Hitler's National Socialist regime created problems for the community—the superior was even imprisoned—and relations with Echt, located in Holland, were difficult. Even though more decent buildings had recently been constructed, an apostolic visitation in 1949, with the

consent of the Definitory, led to a decree of dissolution from the Holy See in 1950, which threw the community into disarray.[4] The bishop, with the help of Mariawald, made some attempts at saving the community, but without success. The house was finally rented to the Jesuits, who used it as a novitiate.

Banz, Bavaria: founded in 1920 to accommodate the German monks of Oelenberg after Alsace was restored to France, it was recognized as a foundation by the 1921 Chapter, and then transferred to Austria, at Engelszell, in 1925, and raised to the rank of abbey in 1931.

It should also be noted that the monastery of Osera (Galicia, Spain), founded in 1929, was closed by the General Chapter in 1962, but reopened in 1965 under pressure from Cardinal Antoniutti and the bishop of Orense.

6.3.2. THE NUNS

The nuns attempted to make six foundation in France, two of which did not last: 1) **Winebaud** was founded by Maubec in 1894, but, lacking sufficient conditions for growth, on account of the demands of the owner of the land, joined up with the foundation Bonneval was making in the Périgueux diocese, namely, 2) **Mariaval**, which was closed in 1904, for lack of recruitment and sufficient enclosure. The houses that lived on were the following: *Belval* (1893), *Bonnegarde*, at Ste-Anne-d'Auray (1920, now at Campénéac under the title La Joie-Notre-Dame), *Igny* (1929), and *Chambarand* (1930).

Four other foundations were made in Europe: *Nazareth* (Belgium), *Berkel* (Netherlands), *Maria Frieden* (Germany), and *Glencairn* (Ireland).

6.4. FOUNDATIONS OUTSIDE OF EUROPE FROM 1892 TO 1965

6.4.1. In *North America*, for the monks, two foundation were made in Canada as early as 1892 (*Prairies* and *Mistassini*), along with Bonnecombe's refuge house, established in 1902 and recognized as a foundation in 1921 (*Calvaire*). It was not until the influx of vocations in the United States after the Second World War, which the USA entered in 1941, that *nine foundations* sprang up between 1942 and 1956.

It was at this time that the nuns settled in the United States. The first foundation was in 1949 (*Wrentham*). Later came *Redwoods* (1962) and *Mississippi* (1964).

4 According to a chronicle notice written for *Collectanea* in 1948, the community was full of hope. It is therefore understandable that they were disappointed with the announcement of the closure. In their evaluations, the authorities of the Order and the community were on completely different wavelengths.

As has been noted, the nuns of Maubec, who returned to Vaise in 1837, went to Canada in 1904 (*Assomption*). The refuge house Bonneval set up in Canada at the time of the eviction laws in France became autonomous in 1923 (*Saint Romuald*).

6.4.2. In the Far East and Oceania, there were fewer foundations: *Phare* (*Tobetsu*) in Japan in 1896, and *Liesse* in China in 1928. In 1954, the Order found a new foothold in Australia (*Tarrawarra*), and made its first settlement in New Zealand (*Southern Star*, Kopua). In 1953, *Rawaseneng* was founded on the Island of Java in Indonesia. The nuns of *Tenshien* arrived soon after the monks of Phare, in 1898. In 1938, they in turn founded at Seiboen (*Nishinomiya*). After the war, *Imari* was founded in 1953 and *Nasu* in 1954.

6.4.3. In *North Africa*, in 1924, the monks of Rajhenburg, because of the political situation in Slovenia, prepared a place of refuge in Algeria, first at Ouled-Triff, and then at Ben Chicao, in the Atlas Mountains. This foundation was taken over by Aiguebelle, which moved it to *Tibhirine*, near Medea, in 1938. In October 1963, it was suggested to the Congregation of Religious that the house be closed. But thanks to the efforts of Cardinal Duval, archbishop of Algiers, and a new Father Immediate, the community was able to continue. After the violent death of seven monks in May 1996, it moved to Morocco.

6.4.4. The Trappists tried to settle in *sub-Saharan Africa* as early as the end of the nineteenth century. But lasting settlements were only attained after 1951.

The two attempts in the nineteenth century turned into missionary adventures: the state of evangelization of these countries did not allow for the implantation of contemplative life at that time.

- **Marianhill**, begun in 1880, broke off from the Order in 1909, in order to become a missionary congregation (see the chapter on Bishop Marre, § 2.3.2.).
- **Bamania** (Our Lady of Saint Joseph), founded in the Belgian Congo in 1893, evolved into a monastic-missionary undertaking, and ceased being connected to the Order in 1926 (see the chapter on Dom Ollitrault, § 3.1.1.).

But beginning in 1951, the great Cistercian adventure in Africa resulted in **seven** foundations of monks and **three** of nuns. The momentum continued after the Second Vatican Council.

6.4.5. In Latin America, the first Trappist presence was the refuge house of Sept-Fons, established in Brazil in 1904. It never became an autonomous house, and the monks returned to Europe in 1927. The nuns of **Macon** also transferred to Brazil, at Tremembre, in 1907. When their situation became precarious, especially with

the death of their remarkable benefactor, they returned to Europe at Feluy (Belgium), in 1920, before joining *Chambarand*, founded in 1930 by Maubec.

It was not until the 1958 foundation of *Azul* in Argentina, and the 1960 foundation of *La Dehesa* in Chile, that the Order got a solid footing in the Southern Cone of Latin America. After the Council, there were numerous foundations of monks and nuns throughout the continent.

6.5. INCORPORATIONS OF BERNARDINES AND OTHER CISTERCIANS

- There were several instances of Bernardine sisters from ancient Cistercian Congregations being incorporated into the Order: **seven** in all from 1923 (*Alloz*) to 1957 (*Tulebras*).
- The 1900 General Chapter allowed *Stapehill*, which had been separated from the Order in 1824, to be affiliated again. But the decision was only provisional: it was not until the autumn of 1914 that the prioress brought the matter to her bishop's attention and that the request was made to the Holy See. In April 1915, the Holy See responded in the affirmative, and Bishop Marre ratified the decision on July 27, 1915. Stapehill founded *Glencairn* in Ireland in 1932.
- *Soleilmont* was joined to the Order in 1920.
- The nuns of Besançon, the heirs of Port-Royal in Paris, were admitted into the Order in 1921, and six years later moved into *Grâce-Dieu*, the monks no longer being there.
- Beginning in 1905, the ancient monastery *La Fille-Dieu*, founded in 1268 in Switzerland, joined the Strict Observance under the paternity of Mont-des-Cats.

Conclusions

The following tables sum up this evolution and show how the Order progressively expanded to a worldwide scale. However, up until the Second World War, expansion beyond Europe was slow: the number of monks' monasteries in 1940 (57) was not much different from the number in 1892 (54), in spite of the foundations that were made, mostly in Europe. These foundations barely made up for the numerous houses that were closed, mostly in France. Because of the vicissitudes of war, there were several foundations and closings in Germany. It should be noted that the Germans went beyond Germany: they populated Mariastern, where there were 123 Germans and 8 Slavs after the First World War. Eight of them, not returning to Mariastern after demobilization, founded Himmerode and passed to the

Common Observance. Germans were also to be found at Engelszell, Deliverance, Oelenberg, Echt, etc.

The nuns, on the other hand, doubled the number of their houses from 1892 to 1940: 26 in place of 13. This growth took place especially in Europe, due in part to the incorporation of Bernardine monasteries that continued in Spain after the war. Of the eight other foundations, only four were outside of Europe, in Japan and Canada. In 1940, the female monasteries of France and French-speaking Switzerland made up 53.8% of the women's communities, whereas the monasteries of French monks made up 29.8% of the men's. By the time of the Council, there were one-third fewer French women's houses, and 20% fewer houses of men. But European monasteries still made up 58.7% of the male branch and 71.4% of the female branch of the Order.

(*See tables on next page*)

Fr = France and Switzerland
Sp = Spain
EuC = Netherlands, Belgium, Central Europe
Ita = Italy
Isles = Great Britain and Ireland
NA = North America (Canada and USA)
LA = Latin America

FE = Far East (China, Japan, Indonesia)
NE = Near East
Afr = Africa
Oc = Oceania
Foun = Foundations
Sup = Suppression
Inc = Incorporations
Tr =Transfer

MONKS

	Fr	Sp	EuC	Ita	Isles	NA	LA	FE	NE	Afr	Oc	Total
1892	23	2	14	2	3	4		**1**	**2**	**2**	**1**	**54**
%	42.6 %	(+) 38.9 % (= 81.5 % for Europe)				7.4 %	11.1 %					
Foun	1	3	6		2	3		2		2		19
Sup	-7		-4						-1	-3	-1	-16
1940	**17**	5	16	2	5	7		3	1	1		**57**
%	29.8 %	(+) 49.1 % (= 78.9 %)				12.3 %	8.8 %					
Foun		1			3	9	2	1		7	2	25
Sup	-1		-1									-2
1965	**16**	**6**	**15**	**2**	**8**	**16**	**2**	**4**	**1**	**8**	**2**	**80**
%	20 %	(+) 38.75 % (= 58.75 % for Europe)				20 %	21.25 %					

NUNS

	Fr	Sp	EuC	Ita	Isles	NA	LA	EO	PO	Afr	Oc	Total
1892	12			1								**13**
%	92.3 %	7.7 %				0 %						
Foun	6		1		1	1		2				11
Aff	2	1	1		1							5
Sup	-3											-3
Tr	-3		+2			+1						0
1940	**14**	**1**	**4**	**1**	**2**	**2**		2				**26**
%	53.8 %	30.8 %				7.7 %	7.7 %					
Foun			2			3		2		3		10
Inc		6										6
Sup												
1965	14	7	6	1	2	5		4		3		**42**
%	33.3 %	(+) 38.1 % (= 71.4 % pour l'Eur)				11.9 %	16.7 %					